

NINETEEN SHORT STORIES

Care has been exercised to discover the owners of all copyrighted stories, but if any acknowledgments have been omitted, or any stories included without due permission, we sincerely trust the copyright-holders will accept our apologies.

Printed by F. Borton for G. Claridge & Co., Ltd., at the
Carrot Press, Faze Road, Bombay, and published by Wm. D.
Tee Boreck for the International Book House, Ltd., Bombay.

19

SHORT STORIES

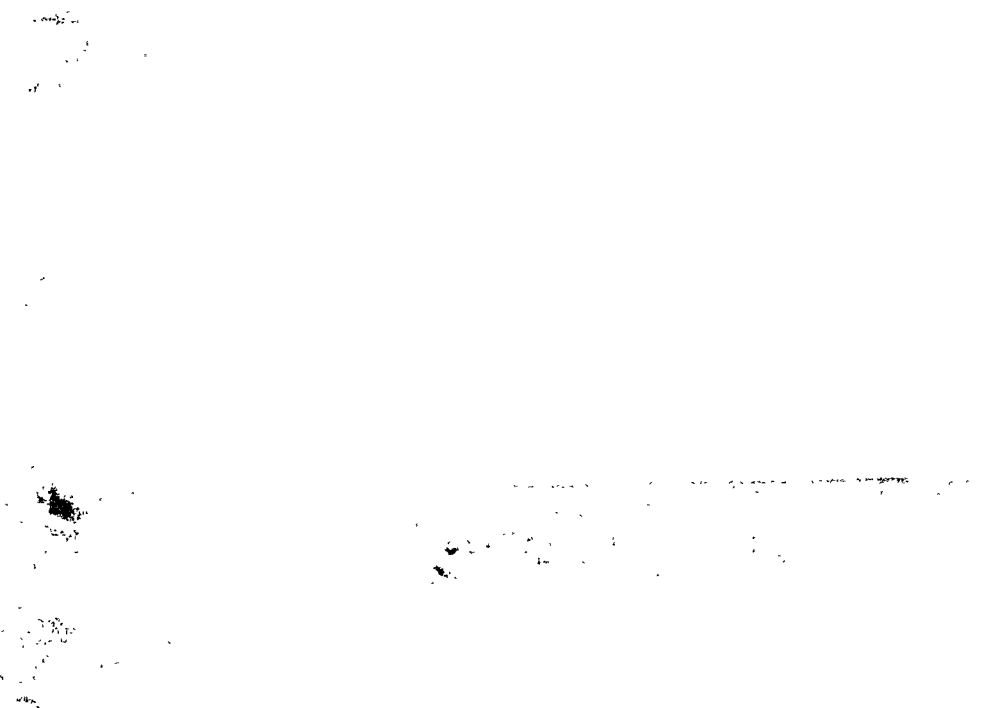
INTERNATIONAL SERIES

No. 4

INTERNATIONAL BOOK HOUSE, LTD.
BOMBAY, INDIA

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. The German Censors .. Heinrich Heine	3
2. The Transferred Ghost .. Frank Stockton	5
3. On the Day of the Crucifixion Leonid Andreyev	17
4. The Magic Ring Marcu Beza	21
5. A Picnic S. Libin	31
6. The Thief .. Feodor Mikailovitch Dostoienski	39
7. The Pyramids Mark Twain	57
8. The House of Eulalie .. Henry Harland	69
9. The Sword Dance Pierre Loti	79
10. In Defence Of His Right .. Daniel Defoe	85
11. The Green-Corn Dance Alice Corbin	97
12. The Parrot W. Duranty	99
13. The Half-Pint Flask .. Duboise Heyward	121
14. The Piece of String .. Guy de Maupassant	137
15. The Half-Brothers Mrs. Gaskell	145
16. The Two Goats From "Dreams of Youth"	157
17. The Open Door Grazia Deledda	159
18. Zenobia's Infidelity Henry Cuyler Bunner	169
19. The Cog James Oppenheim	181

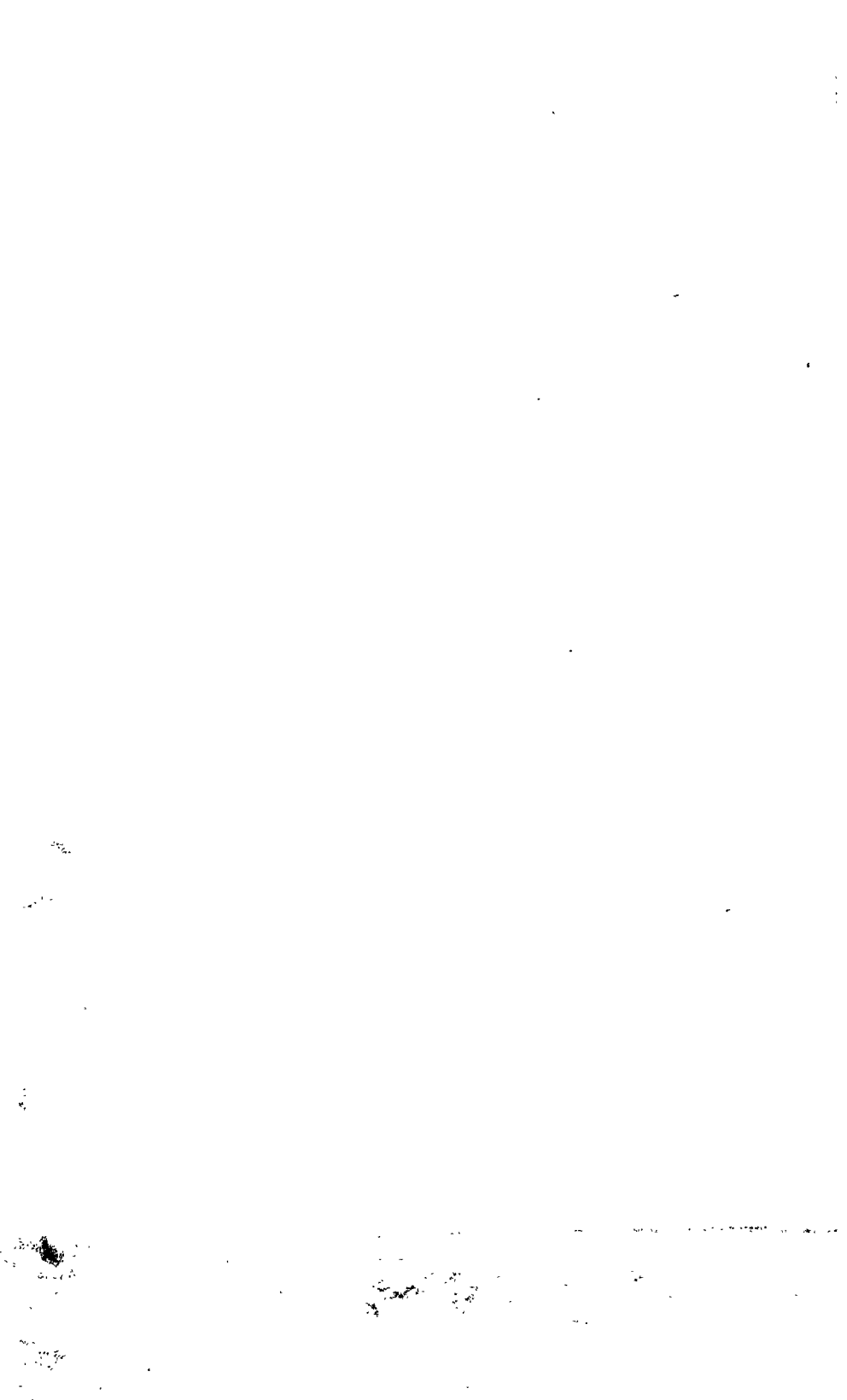


The German Censors

By HEINRICH HEINE

THE German censors of the press

blockheads



The Transferred Ghost 2.

By FRANK STOCKTON

THE country residence of Mr. John Hinckman was a delightful place to me, for many reasons. It was the abode of a genial, though somewhat impulsive, hospitality.

It had broad, smooth-shaven lawns and towering oaks and elms; there were bosky shades at several points, and not far from the house there was a little rill spanned by a rustic bridge with the bark on; there were fruits and flowers, pleasant people, chess, billiards, rides, walks, and fishing. These were great attractions, but none of them, nor all of them together, would have been sufficient to hold me to the place very long. I had been invited for the trout season, but should, probably, have finished my visit early in the summer had it not been that upon fair days, when the grass was dry, and the sun not too hot, and there was but little wind, there strolled beneath the lofty elms, or passed lightly through the bosky shades, the form of my Madeline.

This lady was not, in very truth, my Madeline. She had never given herself to me, nor had I, in any way, acquired possession of her. But as I considered her possession the only sufficient reason for the continuance of my existence, I called her, in my reveries, mine. It may have been that I would not have been obliged to confine the use of this possessive pronoun to my reveries had I confessed the state of my feelings to the lady.

But this was an unusually difficult thing to do. Not only did I dread, as almost all lovers dread, taking the step which would in an instant put an end to that delightful season which may be termed the ante-interrogatory period of love, and which might at the same time terminate all intercourse or connection with the object of my passion; but I was, also, dreadfully afraid of John Hinckman. This gentleman was a good friend of mine, but it required a bolder man than I was at that time for the gift of his niece, who was the head of the family, and, according to his own frequent statement,

THE TRANSFERRED GHOST

7

"It is fully that length of time," said the ghost, "since I first came here. Mine is not an ordinary case. But before I say anything more about it, let me ask you again if you are sure Mr. Hinckman will not return to-night?"

"I am as sure of it as I can be of anything," I answered.

"He left to-day for Bristol, two hundred miles away."

"Then I will go on," said the ghost, "for I am glad to have the opportunity of talking to someone who will listen to me; but if John Hinckman should come in and catch me here, I should be frightened out of my wits."

"This is all very strange," I said, greatly puzzled by what I had heard. "Are you the ghost of Mr. Hinckman?"

This was a bold question, but my mind was so full of other emotions that there seemed to be no room for that of fear.

"Yes, I am his ghost," my companion replied, "and yet I have no right to be. And this is what makes me so uneasy, and so much afraid of him. It is a strange story, and, I truly believe, without precedent. Two years and a half ago, John Hinckman was dangerously ill in this very room. At one time he was so far gone that he was really believed to be dead. It was in consequence of too precipitate a report in regard to this matter that I was, at that time, appointed to be his ghost. Imagine my surprise and horror, sir, when after I had accepted the position and assumed its responsibilities, that old man revived, became convalescent, and eventually regained his usual health. My situation was now one of extreme delicacy and embarrassment. I had no power to return to my original unembodiment, and I had no right to be the ghost of a man who was not dead. I was advised by my friends to quietly maintain my position, and was assured that, as John Hinckman was an elderly man, it could not be long before I could rightfully assume the position for which I had been selected. But I tell you, sir, he continued, with animation, "the old fellow seems as vigorous as ever, and I have no idea how much longer this anomalous state of things will continue. I spend my time trying to get out of that old man's way. I must not leave this room, and he seems to follow me everywhere. I tell you, sir, he follows me."

"That is truly a queer state of things," I remarked. "But why are you afraid of him? He couldn't hurt you."

"Of course he couldn't," said the ghost. "But his very presence is a shock and terror to me. Imagine, sir, how you would feel if my case were yours."

I could not imagine such a thing at all. I simply shuddered.

"And if one must be a wrongful ghost at all," the apparition continued, "it would be much pleasanter to be the ghost of some man other than John Hinckman. There is in him an irascibility of temper, accompanied by a facility of invective, which is seldom met with. And what would happen if he were to see me, and find out, as I am sure he would, how long and why I had inhabited his house, I can scarcely conceive. I have seen him in his bursts of passion, and, although he did not hurt the people he stormed at any more than he would hurt me, they seemed to shrink before him."

All this I knew to be very true. Had it not been for this peculiarity of Mr. Hinckman, I might have been more willing to talk to him about his niece.

"I feel sorry for you," I said, for I really began to have a sympathetic feeling toward this unfortunate apparition. "Your case is indeed a hard one. It reminds me of those persons who have had doubles, and I suppose a man would often be very angry indeed when he found that there was another being who was personating himself."

"Oh, the cases are not similar at all," said the ghost. "A double or doppelgänger lives on the earth with a man, and, being exactly like him, he makes all sorts of trouble, of course. It is very different with me. I am not here to live with Mr. Hinckman. I am here to take his place. Now, it would make John Hinckman very angry if he knew that. Don't you think it would?"

I assented promptly.

"Now that he is away I can be easy for a little while," continued the ghost, "and I am so glad to have an opportunity of talking to you. I have frequently come into your room, and watched you while you slept, but did not dare to speak to you for fear that if you talked with me Mr. Hinckman

would hear you, and come into the room to know why you were talking to yourself."

"But would he not hear you?" I asked.

"Oh, no," said the other, "there are times when any one may see me, but no one hears me except the person to whom I address myself."

"But why did you wish to speak to me?" I asked.

"Because," replied the ghost, "I like occasionally to talk to people, and especially to someone like yourself, whose mind is so troubled and perturbed that you are not likely to be frightened by a visit from one of us. But I particularly wanted to ask you to do me a favour. There is every probability, so far as I can see, that John Hinckman will live a long time, and my situation is becoming insupportable. My great object at present is to get transferred, and I think that you may, perhaps, be of use to me."

"Transferred!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean by that?"

"What I mean," said the other, "is this: now that I have started on my career I have got to be the ghost of somebody; and I want to be the ghost of a man who is really dead."

"I should think that would be easy enough," I said. "Opportunities must continually occur."

"Not at all! not at all!" said my companion, quickly.

"You have no idea what a rush and pressure there is for situations of this kind. Whenever a vacancy occurs, if I may express myself in that way, there are crowds of applications for the ghostship."

"I had no idea that such a state of things existed," I said, becoming quite interested in the matter. "There ought to be some regular system, or order of precedence, by which you could all take your turns like customers in a barber's shop."

"Oh dear, that would never do at all!" said the other. "Some of us would have to wait for ever. There is always a great rush whenever a good ghostship offers itself—while, as you know, there are some positions that no one would care for. And it was in consequence of my being in too great a hurry on an occasion of the kind that I got myself into my present disagreeable predicament, and I have thou

existence, and, now that the opportunity for such speech had really occurred, I did not feel ready to avail myself of it. What would become of me if she refused me?

I had an idea, however, that the lady thought that, if I were going to speak at all, this was the time. She must have known that certain sentiments were afloat within me, and she was not unreasonable in her wish to see the matter settled one way or the other. But I did not feel like taking a bold step in the dark. If she wished me to ask her to give herself to me, she ought to offer me some reason to suppose that she would make the gift. If I saw no probability of such generosity, I would prefer that things should remain as they were.

That evening I was sitting with Madeline in the moonlit porch. It was nearly ten o'clock, and ever since supper-time I had been working myself up to the point of making an avowal of my sentiments. I had not positively determined to do this, but wished gradually to reach the proper point when, if the prospect looked bright, I might speak. My companion appeared to understand the situation—at least, I imagined that the nearer I came to a proposal the more she seemed to expect it. It was certainly a very critical and important epoch in my life. If I spoke, I should make myself happy or miserable for ever, and if I did not speak I had every reason to believe that the lady would not give me another chance to do so.

Sitting thus with Madeline, talking a little, and thinking very hard over these momentous matters, I looked up and saw the ghost, not a dozen feet away from us. He was sitting on the railing of the porch, one leg thrown up before him, the other dangling down as he leaned against a post. He was behind Madeline, but almost in front of me, as I sat facing the lady. It was fortunate that Madeline was looking out over the landscape, for I must have appeared very much startled. The ghost had told me that he would see me some time this night, but I did not think he would make his appearance when I was in the company of Madeline. If she should see the spirit of her uncle, I could not answer for the consequences. I made no exclamation, but the ghost evidently saw that I was troubled.

existence, and, now that the opportunity for such speech had really occurred, I did not feel ready to avail myself of it. What would become of me if she refused me?

I had an idea, however, that the lady thought that, if I were going to speak at all, this was the time. She must have known that certain sentiments were afloat within me, and she was not unreasonable in her wish to see the matter settled one way or the other. But I did not feel like taking a bold step in the dark. If she wished me to ask her to give herself to me, she ought to offer me some reason to suppose that she would make the gift. If I saw no probability of such generosity, I would prefer that things should remain as they were.

That evening I was sitting with Madeline in the moonlit porch. It was nearly ten o'clock, and ever since supper-time I had been working myself up to the point of making an avowal of my sentiments. I had not positively determined to do this, but wished gradually to reach the proper point when, if the prospect looked bright, I might speak. My companion appeared to understand the situation—at least, I imagined that the nearer I came to a proposal the more she seemed to expect it. It was certainly a very critical and important epoch in my life. If I spoke, I should make myself happy or miserable for ever, and if I did not speak I had every reason to believe that the lady would not give me another chance to do so.

Sitting thus with Madeline, talking a little, and thinking very hard over these momentous matters, I looked up and saw the ghost, not a dozen feet away from us. He was sitting on the railing of the porch, one leg thrown up before him, the other dangling down as he leaned against a post. He was behind Madeline, but almost in front of me, as I sat facing the lady. It was fortunate that Madeline was looking out over the landscape, for I must have appeared very much startled. The ghost had told me that he would see me some time this night, but I did not think he would make his appearance when I was in the company of Madeline. If she should see the spirit of her uncle, I could not answer for the consequences. I made no exclamation, but the ghost evidently saw that I was troubled.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

RECEIVED
JAN 10 1964
PHYSICS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
60637

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

thought at all favourably of me she could not feel displeased that I should have disagreeable emotions in regard to a possible rival. The concluding words contained a hint which I was not slow to understand. I felt very sure that if Mr. Vilars were in my present position he would speak quickly enough.

"I know it is wrong to have such ideas about a person," I said, "but I cannot help it."

The lady did not chide me, and after this she seemed even in a softer mood. As for me, I felt considerably annoyed, for I had not wished to admit that any thought of Mr. Vilars had ever occupied my mind.

"You should not speak aloud that way," said the ghost, "or you may get yourself into trouble. I want to see everything go well with you, because then you may be disposed to help me, especially if I should chance to be of any assistance to you, which I hope I shall be."

I longed to tell him that there was no way in which he could help me so much as by taking his instant departure. To make love to a young lady with a ghost sitting on the railing near by, and that ghost the apparition of a much-dreaded uncle, the very idea of whom in such a position and at such a time made me tremble, was a difficult, if not an impossible, thing to do; but I forebore to speak, although I may have looked my mind.

"I suppose," continued the ghost, "that you have not heard anything that might be of advantage to me. Of course, I am very anxious to hear, but if you have anything to tell me, I can wait until you are alone. I will come to you to-night in your room, or I will stay here until the lady goes away."

"You need not wait here," I said; "I have nothing at all to say to you."

Madeline sprang to her feet, her face flushed and her eyes ablaze.

"Wait here!" she cried. "What do you suppose I am waiting for? Nothing to say to me indeed—I should think so! What should you have to say to me?"

"Madeline," I exclaimed, stepping to me explain."

But she had gone.

Here was the end of the world for me! I turned fiercely to the ghost.

"Wretched existence!" I cried. "You have ruined everything. You have blackened my whole life. Had it not been for you—"

But here my voice faltered. I could say no more.

"You wrong me," said the ghost. "I have not injured you. I have tried only to encourage and assist you, and it is your own folly that has done this mischief. But do not despair. Such mistakes as these can be explained. Keep up a brave heart. Good-bye."

And he vanished from the railing like a bursting soap bubble.

I went gloomily to bed, but I saw no apparitions that night except those of despair and misery which my wretched thoughts called up. The words I had uttered had sounded to Madeline like the basest insult. Of course, there was only one interpretation she could put upon them.

As to explaining my ejaculations, that was impossible. I thought the matter over and over again as I lay awake that night, and I determined that I would never tell Madeline the facts of the case. It would be better for me to suffer all my life than for her to know that the ghost of her uncle haunted the house. Mr. Hinckman was away, and if she knew of his ghost she could not be made to believe that he was not dead. She might not survive the shock! No, my heart could bleed, but I would never tell her.

The next day was fine, neither too cool nor too warm; the breezes were gentle, and nature smiled. But there were no walks or rides with Madeline. She seemed to be much engaged during the day, and I saw but little of her. When we met at meals she was polite, but very quiet and reserved. She had evidently determined on a course of conduct, and had resolved to assume that, although I had been very rude to her, she did not understand the import of my words. It would be quite proper, of course, for her not to know what I meant by my expressions of the night before.

I was downcast and wretched, and said but little, and the only bright streak across the black horizon of my woe was the fact that she did not appear to be happy, although she affected an air of unconcern. The moonlight porch was

THE TRANSFERRED GHOST

deserted that evening, but wandering about the house I found Madeline in the library alone. She was reading, I went in and sat down near her. I felt that, although I could not do so fully, I must in a measure explain my conduct of the night before. She listened quietly to a somewhat laborious apology I made for the words I had used.

"I have not the slightest idea what you meant," she said, "but you were very rude."

I earnestly disclaimed any intention of rudeness, assured her, with a warmth of speech that must have made some impression upon her, that rudeness to her would be an action impossible to me. I said a great deal upon the subject, and implored her to believe that if it were not for a certain obstacle I could speak to her so plainly that she would understand everything.

She was silent for a time, and then she said, more kindly, I thought, than she had spoken before :

"Is that obstacle in any way connected with my uncle?"

"Yes," I answered, after a little hesitation, "it is, in a measure, connected with him."

She made no answer to this, and sat looking at her book, but not reading. From the expression of her face I thought she was somewhat softened toward me. She knew her uncle as well as I did, and she may have been thinking that, if he were the obstacle that prevented my speaking (and there were many ways in which he might be such an obstacle), my position would be such a hard one that it would excuse some wildness of speech and eccentricity of manner. I saw, too, that the warmth of my partial explanations had some effect on her, and I began to believe that it might be a good thing for me to speak my mind without disguise. No matter how she should receive my proposition, my relations with her could not be worse than they had been the previous night and day, and there was something in her face which encouraged me to hope that she might forgive my foolish exclamations of the evening before if I began to tell her my tale of love.

I drew my chair a little nearer to her, and as I did the ghost burst into the room from the doorway behind me. I say burst, although no door flew open and he made no noise. He was wildly excited, and was

Here was the end of the world for me ! I turned fiercely to the ghost.

"Wretched existence !" I cried. "You have ruined everything. You have blackened my whole life. Had it not been for you—"

But here my voice faltered. I could say no more.

"You wrong me," said the ghost. "I have not injured you. I have tried only to encourage and assist you, and it is your own folly that has done this mischief. But do not despair. Such mistakes as these can be explained. Keep up a brave heart. Good-bye."

And he vanished from the railing like a bursting soap bubble.

I went gloomily to bed, but I saw no apparitions that night except those of despair and misery which my wretched thoughts called up. The words I had uttered had sounded to Madeline like the basest insult. Of course, there was only one interpretation she could put upon them.

As to explaining my ejaculations, that was impossible. I thought the matter over and over again as I lay awake that night, and I determined that I would never tell Madeline the facts of the case. It would be better for me to suffer all my life than for her to know that the ghost of her uncle haunted the house. Mr. Hinckman was away, and if she knew of his ghost she could not be made to believe that he was not dead. She might not survive the shock ! No, my heart could bleed, but I would never tell her.

The next day was fine, neither too cool nor too warm ; the breezes were gentle, and nature smiled. But there were no walks or rides with Madeline. She seemed to be much engaged during the day, and I saw but little of her. When we met at meals she was polite, but very quiet and reserved. She had evidently determined on a course of conduct, and had resolved to assume that, although I had been very rude to her, she did not understand the import of my words. It would be quite proper, of course, for her not to know what I meant by my expressions of the night before.

I was downcast and wretched, and said but little, and the only bright streak across the black horizon of my woe was the fact that she did not appear to be happy, although she affected an air of unconcern. The moonlight porch was

THE TRANSFERRED GHOST

15

deserted that evening, but wandering about the house I found Madeline in the library alone. She was reading, but I went in and sat down near her. I felt that, although I could not do so fully, I must in a measure explain my conduct of the night before. She listened quietly to a somewhat laboured apology I made for the words I had used.

"I have not the slightest idea what you meant," she said, "but you were very rude."

I earnestly disclaimed any intention of rudeness, and assured her, with a warmth of speech that must have made some impression upon her, that rudeness to her would be an action impossible to me. I said a great deal upon the subject, and implored her to believe that if it were not for a certain obstacle I could speak to her so plainly that she would understand everything.

She was silent for a time, and then she said, rather more kindly, I thought, than she had spoken before:

"Is that obstacle in any way connected with my uncle?"

"Yes," I answered, after a little hesitation, "it is, in a measure, connected with him."

She made no answer to this, and sat looking at her book, but not reading. From the expression of her face, I thought she was somewhat softened toward me. She knew her uncle as well as I did, and she may have been thinking that, if he were the obstacle that prevented my speaking (and there were many ways in which he might be that obstacle), my position would be such a hard one that it would excuse some wildness of speech and eccentricity of manner. I saw, too, that the warmth of my partial explanations had had some effect on her, and I began to believe that it might be a good thing for me to speak my mind without delay. No matter how she should receive my proposition, my relations with her could not be worse than they had been the previous night and day, and there was something in her face which encouraged me to hope that she might forget my foolish exclamations of the evening before if I began to tell her my tale of love.

I drew my chair a little nearer to her, and as I did so the ghost burst into the room from the doorway behind her. I say burst, although no door flew open and he made no noise. He was wildly excited, and waved his arms above

his head. The moment I saw him, my heart fell within me. With the entrance of that impertinent apparition, every hope fled from me. I could not speak while he was in the room.

I must have turned pale, and I gazed steadfastly at the ghost, almost without seeing Madeline, who sat between us.

"Do you know," he cried, "that John Hinckman is coming up the hill? He will be here in fifteen minutes, and if you are doing anything in the way of love-making, you had better hurry it up. But this is not what I came to tell you. I have glorious news! At last I am transferred! Not forty minutes ago a Russian nobleman was murdered by the Nihilists. Nobody ever thought of him in connection with an immediate ghostship. My friends instantly applied for the situation for me, and obtained my transfer. I am off before that horrid Hinckman comes up the hill. The moment I reach my new position, I shall put off this hated semblance. Good-bye. You can't imagine how glad I am to be, at last, the real ghost of somebody."

"Oh!" I cried, rising to my feet and stretching out my arms in utter wretchedness, "I would to heaven you were mine!"

"I *am* yours," said Madeline, raising to me her tearful eyes.

On the Day of the Crucifixion

By LEONID ANDREYEV

ON that terrible day, when the great crime was committed and Jesus the Christ was crucified on Golgotha among robbers—on that day, from early morning, Ben-Tovit, a tradesman of Jerusalem, had suffered from a piercing toothache. His toothache had commenced the day previous toward nightfall; at first the right side started to pain him, and then one tooth, the right one next to the wisdom tooth seemed to have raised itself, and when his tongue touched it, he felt a slightly painful sensation. After supper, however, his toothache was gone, and Ben-Tovit had forgotten all about it—he had made a profitable deal on that day, had bartered an old donkey for a young, strong one, so he was very cheerful and paid no heed to this ominous sign.

Further, he slept very soundly, but just before daybreak something began to disturb him. It was as if someone were calling him on a very important matter, and when Ben-Tovit awoke angrily, his jaw was paining, paining openly and maliciously, causing him an acute, drilling ache. And he could no longer determine whether it was merely the same tooth that had ached on the previous evening, or whether others had joined in. Ben-Tovit's entire mouth and his head seemed filled with terrible spasms of pain, just as if he had been forced to chew thousands of sharp, red-hot nails. He took some water into his mouth from an earthen jug and for a moment the acuteness of the pain subsided, his teeth twitched and swayed, but this sensation was pleasant compared with the other.

Down Ben-Tovit lay again, recalled his new donkey, and thought how happy he would have been if it was not for his toothache. He wanted to fall asleep but the water became warm in his mouth and in five minutes his toothache began to rage more severely than ever. Ben-Tovit sat in bed and swayed back and forth. His face became and shrunk, and a drop of perspiration upon which had turned pale from his suffering.

back and forth and groaning with pain, he saw the first rays of the sun, which was destined also to shine on Golgotha and its three crosses, and to grow dim from horror and sorrow.

Now Ben-Tovit was a good and kind man, and he hated any injustice, but when his wife awoke he said many unpleasant things to her, opening his mouth with difficulty. He complained that he was left alone, like a jackal, to groan and writhe with pain. His wife met the undeserved reproaches patiently, for she knew that they came from no angry heart; so she brought him numerous good remedies: rats' litter to be applied to the cheek; some strong liquid in which a scorpion had been preserved, and a real chip of the Tablets that Moses had broken. He began to feel a little better from the application of the rats' litter, also from the liquid and the stone, but not for long, for the pain returned each time with renewed intensity.

During the intervening moments of rest, Ben-Tovit consoled himself with the thought of the little donkey, and he dreamed of him, and when he felt worse he moaned, scolded his wife, and threatened to dash his head against a rock if the pain continued. He kept pacing back and forth on the flat roof of their house from one corner to the other, feeling ashamed to come close to the side facing the street, for he had tied his head round with a bandage and looked like a woman. Several times the children came running to him and told him hastily about Jesus of Nazareth. Ben-Tovit paused, listened to them for awhile, his face wrinkled, but then he stamped his foot angrily and chased them away. He was a kind man and he loved children, but now he was annoyed for bothering him with such trifles.

Also it was a disagreeable thing that a large crowd had gathered in the street, and on the neighbouring roofs, doing nothing except apparently looking curiously at Ben-Tovit, who had his head wrapped up in a kerchief like a woman.

"Look! They're taking robbers up there! Perhaps that will divert you."

"Leave me alone. Don't you see I'm suffering?" Ben-Tovit replied angrily.

But there was some vague promise in his wife's words that there might be some relief for his toothache, so he

walked over to the parapet's edge even though unwillingly. Bending his neck, closing one eye, and supporting his cheek on his hand, his face assumed a hurt expression, and he looked down into the street.

On the narrow street, going up the hill, a large disorderly crowd was moving forward, covered with dust and incessantly shouting. In the middle of the crowd walked the criminals, staggering under the weight of their crosses, while over them the whips of the Roman soldiers were wriggling about like black snakes. One of the men, the one with the long light hair, in a torn blood-stained cloak, stumbled over a stone which rolled under his foot, and he fell. Thereupon the tumult grew louder, and the crowd closed in about the man on the ground. Ben-Tovit suddenly shuddered with pain; he felt as though someone had pierced a red-hot needle into his tooth and turned it there; he groaned and walked away from the scene angry at his tooth and indifferent to all else save his own troubles.

"How loud they are shouting!" he said enviously, picturing to himself their wide-open mouths, their strong, healthy teeth, and how too, he would have shouted if he had been well. This intensified his toothache, and he shook his muffled head frequently, and moaned: "O-o-oh O-o-oh Oh!"

"They say that He restored sight to the blind," said his wife, who remained standing at the parapet, and she threw a small broken tile towards the place where Jesus, urged forward by the whips, was moving slowly.

"Of course, of course! He should have cured my toothache," replied Ben-Tovit ironically, and he added bitterly with irritation: "What a dust they have made! Like a herd of cattle! They should all be driven away with whips! Let's go down, Sarah!"

But the wife proved to be right. The spectacle had diverted Ben-Tovit slightly—it might have also been the rats' litter as well—and he succeeded in falling asleep. When he awoke, his toothache had vanished almost completely. There was only a slight inflammation in the right side of the jaw. His wife told him that it was hardly noticeable but Ben-Tovit smiled to himself—he knew how kind-hearted his wife was and how she liked telling him pleasant things.

Heat in a part of the body, with pain, redness, and swelling.

Samuel, the leather tanner, a neighbour of Ben-Tovit's, came in, and Ben-Tovit led him out to see the little donkey and listened proudly to the warm praises for himself and his animal.

Then, at the request of the curious Sarah, the three went to Golgotha to see the people who had been crucified. On the way Ben-Tovit told Samuel in detail how he had felt a pain in his right jaw the day before, and how he awoke at night with a terrible toothache. To illustrate it he made a martyr's face, closing his eyes, shaking his head, and groaning, while the grey-bearded Samuel nodded compassionately.

"Indeed it must have been very painful!"

Ben-Tovit was pleased with Samuel's attitude, and he repeated the story to him, then went back to the past, when his first tooth began to decay on the left side. Thus, absorbed in lively conversation, they reached Golgotha. The sun, which was destined to shine upon the world on that terrible day, had already set behind the distant hills, and in the west only a narrow, purple-red strip remained, like the stain of blood. The crosses stood out darkly but rather vaguely against this background, and at the foot of the middle cross white kneeling figures were seen indistinctly.

The crowd had long dispersed; it was growing chilly, and after a glance at the crucified men, Ben-Tovit took Samuel by the arm and turned him in the direction of his house. He felt that he had become particularly eloquent just then, and he was eager to finish the story of his toothache. Away they walked, and Ben-Tovit made a martyr's face, shook his head and groaned mournfully, while Samuel nodded and uttered compassionate exclamations from time to time, while from the deep, narrow valleys and out of the distant, burning plains, rose dark night. It seemed as though it wished to hide from the view of heaven the Great Crime.

The Magic Ring 4

By MARCU BEZA

EVERYONE knew Tina Sidu, slim and small, in a black gown, on her head a kerchief of the same colour, from beneath which hung two curls as signs of mourning, curls which quivered in lines of shadow of the tear-worn face. She often took the same road and the women whispered:

"Tina Sidu . . ."

"Poor Tina! No news to this day!"

Thoughtfully their gaze followed her as she made her way toward the outskirts of the village. Above the Dry Valley lay a house which was unlike other houses. With unplastered walls, bare rafters, eaves falling over under the weight of the tiles, the house stood silent during the day among patches of nettles and poisonous weeds. When night fell, tumult arose—a whirlwind of sound, a noise of whistling and the ringing of bells. When the disturbance was at its height a figure would cross the threshold and riding upon a distaff rush toward the valley. After cock-crow, the house relapsed once more into the silence of ruin.

"You have come?" said a voice as Tina Sidu approached, a voice which during the day showed itself in the form of an old woman of the name of Boja. "Ah yes, my daughter, I shall help you to see—"

For a time Boja silently arranged the cards. At last, without looking at Tina Sidu she began:

"It is the same as before . . . ah, may he be punished, but there he is! By his side is a woman, it can be no other than she, your child. See, the cards fall together. To the woman comes a longing, a turning toward you—a longing full of tears, my daughter; she cries, how she cries! And here—a road which runs toward the sunset. She has passed along it once and turned back . . . There is a journey—I foretell a journey—later on—not to-morrow not the day after, but later. . . ." Laying the cards aside she raised her hard, worn face, in which the eyes flickered rapidly like

NINETEEN SHORT STORIES

affies, and added softly : " The cards speak, my daughter, t they do not tell much. Come again at night. Come when : waters are sleeping. Only then shall we be able to find t where she dwells . . . "

With eyes downcast and full of tears, Tina Sidu left e witch. Her lips moved and she murmured, " Ica, my a l "

For nearly six months, in torturing uncertainty, she d sought the smallest clue as to her daughter's where- outs. " Where is she ? Will she come back to me ? " Her ind ran continually upon Ica and, amid the mist of incom- prehensible things, old memories began to stir. Scenes long ist brought a glow of remembered happiness which, owever, only increased her sense of loss. She could not help welling on them, however.

It was Easter Sunday in the afternoon. From the foot f the wood rose strains of music, far-off and faint. Tina, waiting for her daughter, had lost patience. She went rest- ssly from door to window and back. She called to Ica.

" Come, dear one, it is late and nearly everyone has one, nearly everyone. "

Ica was lingering before the glass. When at last she ppeared and Tina beheld her in her blue satin gown, she xclaimed with delight.

" You are as beautiful as a sunbeam ! " And, flying to he window, she picked from the flower-pot a red peony. Fastening it in the girl's hair she took the dear face between ier hands and kissed it, crying, " May the evil not harm you, my dove. "

They started, but every few steps Tina must turn to glance at her daughter as though she could eat her up with love.

Beyond the village, from the grassy clearing above which the forest stretched away indefinitely with its fresh springs, its tender grass and mosses, came the sound of lutes, clarionets and drums. The dance had begun, the young men on one side, the girls on the other. Dressed in festal clothes, with the sun sparkling on necklace, silks and curls, the dance might have been likened to the movement of flowers woven into a garland. Now they mingled, now

they drew apart. In their hands were flowers of every colour. The onlookers, standing in the sloping meadow as on terraces, followed them with their gaze.

"Look at Oana's Sirma, like a may-blossom."

"And Zitza Dedu, how she has changed . . ."

"The girls grow up, that is certain. We shall soon be thinking of weddings."

"Look quickly—who is this?"

All turned as Ica approached. From what fairy palace was she come?

Her face was white, of a vivid whiteness, like velvet, but when she was dancing, when she stepped forward at the head of the line, she glowed like the peony in her hair. Swinging in graceful rhythm, she hardly knew whether she trod the ground. Her lips were parted, her teeth shining and little curls were lifted from her forehead by the breeze. A murmur ran round: "Tina's Ica, long life to her, long life to her!" Mothers would have been willing to accept her as a daughter-in-law and even when the dance was at an end, the talk was still of her, for in the eyes of the young men she lingered like the new moon. They were enthralled by her warm beauty, they adored her in their thoughts. Whispers grew rhythmically, word linked itself to word and next day a song was being sung. It rose unexpectedly from the road below the houses and Tina heard it.

One evening she could not refrain from crying out: "Ica, my dear one, come. Come, here."

From over the hills floated a song—some drover doubtless, so transitory was the sound, moving away with his caravan. On the calm night breeze, drifting across the open spaces, it sounded so clearly that the softest inflexions could be heard. The final words, faint, fraught with charm, died on the distance.

*"The jewel of our world
Is Ica—lovely Ica."*

"Do you hear, dear one?"

The girl's eyes filled with pleasure and her bosom heaved. Yet a few seconds later, as she passed through the room, she pretended to disbelieve.

"That is like you, mother! Am I the only Ica? It is a common name and there are many besides me . . ."

Coming close to Tina, she added bashfully, "Am I lovely, mother?"

"Are you not, Treasure? Is anyone more beautiful?"

"Why do you say so, mother? I am not plump and rosy like Sirma."

"Ah, but the expression of your mouth, your eyes . . ."

"Come, mother, Zitza has eyes like mine."

"Zitza may have those eyes, but yours are like almonds. They are so soft, so soft that your mother never tires of kissing them."

The happiness of mother and daughter was increased by the return of Tina's husband. Four years previously Sidu had gone on business to Stamboul. After this long absence he reached home safe and well. Tina laughed and cried, not knowing in which way to show her joy. How much there was to ask, how much to tell. They spoke of the living and the dead, of engagements and weddings. The wife began to speak of the dance at the edge of the forest, of her daughter's success, and Ica threw her arms round her father's neck, whispering in a half-song:

"The jewel of our world

Is Ica,—lovely Ica."

How was it that on these happy lives fell change, a change for the worse? Winter came, a winter with snow so heavy that the posts marking the road on the top of the hill were buried. One evening, out of the white distance, a stranger came to the village, a traveller. Where could he find hospitality? Nowhere more fitly than at Sidu's house. As the traveller entered Tina saw at a glance that he must be son of a Pasha. Underneath his black pelisse trimmed with sable, he wore a gold-embroidered jacket and trousers. What else then could he be? He was a handsome man, tall and bronzed, with flashing eyes, and at the corners of his mouth, beneath his black moustache was an expression, shadowy but attractive.

Had he heard of Ica? Perhaps, for speaking to Sidu he asked: "How many children have you?"

"Only the one daughter."

Tina, to whom Sidu translated the words, raised a finger, adding in her native speech which it appeared that

the stranger did not understand: "So many has God given us."

It fell to the daughter of the house to serve the stranger. When she appeared in the doorway with the tray he uttered a quickly stifled cry, and stared, his black eyes darkening. The girl blushed, then turned ashy white, trembling, the tray nearly slipped from her hands. The mother, looking on, thought she was shy of this stranger upon whom it was her duty to wait.

During the meal the stranger appeared to be lost in thought, but from time to time the blood flooded his face. Tina, watching him, said to her husband:

"Ask his name and whence he comes, for we should know."

"I have asked. He is Ruhi Bey from Samghiol."

The traveller hearing Sidu utter his name looked up with a smile and nod. He left on the following day—on a bird which comes from the unknown and returns to it.

How could Tina have guessed what was to follow? She stood at the window by Ica's side, following him with her gaze as his figure dwindled till hidden by the snow. Only when she turned back into the room did she hear Ica say: "Mother—look, mother!"

By the cup out of which the stranger had drunk, lay a ring.

"He has dropped it, he has forgotten it," said Sidu uneasily, but Ica was pleased with it. She put it on, begging her mother to note how fine was its workmanship. It was of gold and set with a dark stone that flashed as had the stranger's eyes.

At the end of the winter Sidu had again to leave home on business. The parting was troubled by forebodings. Ica clasped her father in her arms, hugged him again and again. Disquieted he turned to Tina.

"Take good care of the child," said he.

From that time Ica was changed. One night Tina was aroused by an unusual sound. She was wondering what could have caused it, but presently fell asleep again. Once more the disturbing sound and a voice, the voice of the Blessed Virgin from the icon, whispered: "Get up, Tina. All is not well," but again she slept.

When toward morning she finally awoke, Ica was not there.

The next day and the third and the fourth passed. Ica had gone from her, gone without a word of explanation or farewell.

At first Tina felt sure the child would return. She said to herself, "Come now, why distress myself, I shall see her soon. If I go out I shall find her here when I return . . ."

During the first days of Ica's absence, Tina did not think of it as due to the stranger. In time, however, trifling recollections took on importance, became suspicious.

Who was the man? And that ring—had he not left it on purpose? How curiously the stone in the gold setting had shone. How changeable it had been, turning in the light from deep blue to sapphire, and from sapphire to a paler blue. When Ica gazed into its depths what had she seen?

Tina remembered a day when the child dreaming, had whispered, "What eyes he had."

"Who, dear one?"

"The traveller, mother. And how handsome he was."

"Handsome, yes—but a Turk, my love, a Turk?"

"What if he were a Turk? Are not Turks the same as ourselves, mother?"

"As ourselves? Yes, but you see, dear one—that is to say, they are of course the same but Turks, Turks."

During those first days of uncertainty, some shepherds brought the news that, from the Muric slopes, toward day-break of the day on which Ica had disappeared, a troop of horsemen had been seen. Their leader appeared to be holding a woman in his arms and all had galloped along the road toward Seraghiol.

This agreed with Boja's card-throwing—"toward the sunset—your daughter . . ."

Tina had gone again to consult her.

The sorceress had lighted a fire on the hearth and upon the flames, muttering an inaudible incantation, she threw dried herbs. The flames quivered, crackling bright and high. At the same moment a sudden storm rose from the Dry Valley, a storm which increased and beat against the

house. Boja sat unmoved, staring at the tongues of flame. After a time she said :

"The ring, my daughter . . . that which others have bound I cannot unloose."

The words were almost lost in a confusion of sounds. Phantoms beat against the walls, their sinister cries sounding above that of the wind. A gust blew down the chimney beating on the fire and filling the room with the smell of the burnt herbs, filling it also with a suffocating smoke. Boja was scarcely visible, she appeared to have receded into a suddenly appearing distance, when fragments only of her speech reached the listener.

"Now I see them . . . there is a seraglio . . . pass through the door . . . what a door, my daughter ! From room to room. They keep her imprisoned in seven rooms with seven keys."

Involuntarily Tina murmured : "Seven rooms with seven keys," and she must have repeated these words in the presence of others for by the following day they were in everybody's mouth.

"Seven rooms with seven keys."

But where the seraglio might be remained an insoluble mystery.

Caravans coming from a distance passed between the houses. The sound of their bells drew the people to the doors and the strangers halted, willing to talk, to tell of places far away. The caravans moved on but left behind suspicions and suppositions. Rumours arose. Imagination was at work, building that seraglio, giving it a place on earth.

"Somewhere in Seraghiol, with high turreted walls . . . a marble staircase . . . Ica descends it . . . She sits by the fountain in the garden . . . The water leaps and falls and twists itself into strings of pearls . . . Ica cries and cries . . . To drive away her longing a slave comes out and plays the castanets . . . Still she cries . . ."

Fresh rumours rose. Unexpected, mysterious, like flakes of snow they came. The position of the seraglio was given with certainty. Peter Shodi, a well-known driver, described it to the unhappy mother. "It is above Caila beyond the impenetrable Buiuc-Orman, as you come from the plain."

When, however, search was made, it proved fruitless. The seraglio was not there. The villagers were beside themselves with astonishment. They met together, uneasy, frightened, thrilled with the fear of something hidden and sinister.

"Is it possible? The man swore on his oath!"

"He said he saw it with his eyes."

"Perhaps wicked spirits did it. They are able to build palaces out of nothing. They can cast spells on us to make us see what is not there."

"How did Shodi know it was the seraglio?"

"He did not know. The man lifted his eyes and suddenly a woman appeared. 'Whose is this palace?'

"The palace? Ruhi Bey's."

"Ruhi Bey's—who knows? The woodman may have been he himself. There he is a woodman, here the son of a Pasha, perhaps elsewhere he is something different again . . . That Ruhi Bey is a great magician."

What was Tina to believe? What was she to say? From her husband she received letters asking after Ica and when he knew the truth, letters full of bitterness. Boja when consulted repeated the phrase: "There is a journey—I foretell a journey—"

On one occasion she added: "When the leaves have grown she will come."

But the leaves burgeoned and faded, the vines yielded their fruit and the grapes were gathered, the white snow fell and the snow melted, the leaves grew again and the hot weather came.

During those days Tina would stand at the window without moving for hours together. The mountains in the west grew blue. Out of their mysterious world white clouds arose like birds. Tina would have liked to ask them: "Tell me—where is she now? What is she doing? Does she long for home?" The clouds dissolved, bringing her crowding thoughts a sense of finality, a suffering lacking tears—a suffering with which nothing could be compared. The sharp sound of the fretting wood-fretter could be heard; below lay the deserted garden, from among the fading trees, from among the rank-smelling weeds about which spiders threw their glittering threads, small winged creatures

floated in the intense heat. They fluttered into the room emphasizing the silence by their continuous murmur, till Tina's sight grew dim and outlines grew misty. After a while she would lose her sense of reality, and whisper to herself:

"Ica, my treasure, you have not left me . . . you are here, my soul . . . Ah, I knew you had not gone . . ."

Years after, at twilight on a spring day, the sound of trotting horses was heard upon the road. A number of riders drew up at Sidu's house and, dismounting one after the other, they knocked on the door. Three, four, many times they knocked . . .

An old man lying in a neighbouring house spoke to them. "Whom do you seek?"

"Is not Tina here?" asked the voice of a woman. The old man started in surprise, holding his breath. The woman was a stranger, wearing a Turkish mantle, yet she spoke in the language of the village, and her face, dimly seen through the dusk of evening—like a shadow from the past—seemed to him familiar.

"Which Tina?" he asked. "Ica's mother? But—Ica's mother died of grief."

The woman, after a pause, overcome, hardly restraining her tears, asked: "And Sidu? Is not this the house of Sidu?"

"Sidu went from us to live among strangers. He has not been seen again; but I have been told that God has taken Sidu, also, to Himself."

Passing through Niveasta in Macedonia with the caravans I have seen the ruined walls that were once the home of Ica.

A Picnic 5.

By S. LIBIN

ASK Shmuel, the capmaker, just for a joke, if he would like to come for a picnic! He'll fly out at you as if you had invited him to a swing on the gallows. The fact is, he and his Sarah *once* went for a picnic, and the poor man will remember it all his days.

It was on a Sabbath towards the end of August. Shmuel came home from work, and said to his wife:

"Sarah, dear!"

"Well, husband?" was her reply.

"I want to have a treat," said Shmuel, as though alarmed at the boldness of the idea.

"What sort of a treat? Shall you go to the swimming-bath to-morrow?"

"Ett! What's the fun of that?"

"Then, what have you thought of by way of an exception? A glass of ice water for supper?"

"Not that, either."

"A whole siphon?"

Shmuel denied with a shake of the head.

"Whatever can it be!" Wondered Sarah. "Are you going to fetch a pint of beer?"

"What should I want with beer?"

"Are you going to sleep on the roof?"

"Wrong again!"

"To buy some more carbolic acid, and drive out the bugs?"

"Not a bad idea," observed Shmuel, "but that is not it, either."

"Well, then, whatever is it, for goodness' sake! The moon?" asked Sarah, beginning to lose patience. "What have you been and thought of? Tell me once for all, and have done with it!"

And Shmuel said:

"Sarah, you know, we belong to a lodge."

"Of course I do!" and Sarah gave him a mingled astonishment and alarm. "It's not more

week since you took a whole dollar there, and I'm not likely to have forgotten what it cost you to make it up. What is the matter now? Do they want another?"

"Try again?"

"Out with it!"

"I—want us, Sarah," stammered Shmuel—"to go for a picnic."

"A picnic!" screamed Sarah. "Is that the only thing you have left to wish for?"

"Look here, Sarah, we toil and moil the whole year through. It's nothing but trouble and worry, trouble and worry. Call that living! When do we ever have a bit of pleasure?"

"Well, what's to be done?" said his wife, in a subdued tone.

"The summer will soon be over, and we haven't set eyes on a green blade of grass. We sit day and night sweating in the dark."

"True enough!" sighed his wife, and Shmuel spoke louder:

"Let us have an outing, Sarah. Let us enjoy ourselves for once, and give the children a breath of fresh air, let us have a change, if it's only for five minutes!"

"What will it cost?" asks Sarah, suddenly, and Shmuel has soon made the necessary calculation.

"A family ticket is only thirty cents, for Yossele, Rivele, Hannahle, and Berele; for Resele and Doletzke I haven't to pay any car fare at all. For you and me, it will be ten cents there and ten back—that makes fifty cents. Then I reckon thirty cents for refreshments to take with us: a pineapple (a damaged one isn't more than five cents), a few bananas, a piece of water melon, a bottle of milk for the children, and a few rolls—the whole thing shouldn't cost us more than eighty cents at the outside."

"Eighty cents!" and Sarah clapped her hands together in dismay. "Why, you can live on that two days, and it takes nearly a whole day's earning. You can buy an old ice-box for eighty cents, you can buy a pair of trousers—eighty cents!"

"Leave off talking nonsense!" said Shmuel, disconcerted. "Eighty cents won't make us rich. We shall get

on just the same whether we have them or not. We must live like human beings one day in the year! Come, Sarah, let us go! We shall see lots of other people, and we'll watch them, and see how *they* enjoy themselves. It will do you good to see the world, to go where there's a bit of life! Listen, Sarah, what have you been to worth seeing since we came to America? Have you seen Brooklyn Bridge, or Central Park, or the Baron Hirsh baths?"

"You know I haven't!" Sarah broke in. "I've no time to go about sight-seeing. I only know the way from here to the market."

"And what do you suppose?" cried Shmuel. "I should be as great a green-horn as you, if I hadn't been obliged to look everywhere for work. Now I know that America is a great big place. Thanks to the slack times, I know where there's an Eighth Street, and a One Hundred and Thirtieth Street with tin works, and an Eighty-fourth Street with a match factory. I know every single land round the World Building. I know where the cable car line stops. But you, Sarah, know nothing at all, no more than if you had just landed. Let us go, Sarah, I am sure you won't regret it!"

"Well, you know best!" said his wife, and this time she smiled. "Let us go!"

And thus it was that Shmuel and his wife decided to join the lodge picnic on the following day.

Next morning they all rose much earlier than usual on a Sunday, and there was a great noise, for they took the children and scrubbed them without mercy. Sarah prepared a bath for Doletzke, and Doletzke screamed the house down. Shmuel started washing Yossele's feet, but as Yossele habitually went barefoot, he failed to bring about any visible improvement, and had to leave the little pair of feet to soak in a basin of warm water, and Yossele cried too. It was twelve o'clock before the children were dressed and ready to start, and then Sarah turned her attention to her husband, arranged his trousers, took the spots out of his coat with kerosene, sewed a button onto his vest. After that she dressed herself, in her old-fashioned satin wedding dress. At two o'clock they set forth, and took their places in the car.

"Haven't we forgotten anything?" asked Sarah of her husband.

Shmuel counted his children and the traps. "No, nothing, Sarah!" he said.

Doletzke went to sleep, the other children sat quietly in their places. Sarah, too, fell into a doze, for she was tired out with the preparations for the excursion.

All went smoothly till they got some way up town, when Sarah gave a start.

"I don't feel very well—my head is so dizzy," she said to Shmuel.

"I don't feel very well, either," answered Shmuel. "I suppose the fresh air has upset us."

"I suppose it has," said his wife. "I'm afraid for the children."

Scarcely had she spoken when Doletzke woke up, whimpering, and was sick. Yossele, who was looking at her, began to cry likewise. The mother scolded him, and this set the other children crying. The conductor cast a wrathful glance at poor Shmuel, who was so frightened that he dropped the handbag with the provisions, and then, conscious of the havoc he had certainly brought about inside the bag by so doing, he lost his head altogether, and sat there in a daze. Sarah was hushing the children, but the look in her eyes told Shmuel plainly enough what to expect once they had left the car. And no sooner had they all reached the ground in safety than Sarah shot out:

"So, nothing would content him but a picnic? Much good may it do him! You're a workman, and workmen have no call to go gadding about!"

Shmuel was already weary of the whole thing, and said nothing, but he felt a tightening of the heart.

He took up Yossele on one arm and carried the bag with the presumably smashed-up contents besides.

"Hush, my dears! Hush, my babies!" he said. "Wait a little and mother will give you some bread and sugar. Hush, be quiet!" He went on, but still the children cried.

Sarah carried Doletzke, and rocked her as she walked, while Berele and Hannable trotted alongside.

"He has shortened my days," said Sarah, "may his be shortened likewise."

Soon afterwards they turned into the park.

"Let us find a tree and sit down in the shade," said Shmuel. "Come, Sarah!"

"I haven't the strength to drag myself a step further," declared Sarah, and she sank down like a stone just near the gate. Shmuel was about to speak, but a glance at Sarah's face told him she was worn out, and he sat down beside his wife without a word. Sarah gave Doletzke the breast. The other children began to roll about in the grass, laughed and played, and Shmuel breathed easier. to ab
- 6

Girls in holiday attire walked about the park, and there were groups under the trees. Here was a handsome girl surrounded by admiring boys, and there a handsome young man encircled by a bevy of girls.

Out of the leafy distance of the park came the melancholy song of a workman; nearby stood a man playing on a fiddle. Sarah looked about her and listened, and by degrees her vexation vanished. It is true that her heart was still sore, but it was not with the soreness of anger. She was taking her life to pieces and thinking it over, and it seemed a very hard bitter one, and when she looked at her husband and thought of his life, she was near crying, and she laid her hands upon his knee. Shmuel also sat lost in thought. He was thinking about the trees and the roses and the grass, and listening to the fiddle. And he also was sad at heart.

"O Sarah!" he sighed, and he would have said more, but just at that moment it began to spot with rain, and before they had time to move there came a downpour. People started to scurry in all directions, but Shmuel stood like a statue.

"Shlimm-mazel, look after the children!" commanded Sarah. Shmuel caught up two of them, Sarah another two or three, and they ran to a shelter. Doletzke began to cry afresh.

"Mame hungry!" began Berele.

"Hungry, hungry!" wailed Yossele. "I want to eat!"

Shmuel hastily opened the handbag, and then for the first time he saw what had really happened: the bottle had broken, and the milk was flooding the bag; the rolls and bananas were soaked, and the pineapple (a damaged one to begin with) looked too nasty for words. Sarah caught sight

of the bag, and was so angry, she was at a loss how to wreak vengeance on her husband. She was ashamed to scream and scold in the presence of other people, but she went up to him, and whispered fervently into his ear, "The same to you, my good man!"

The children continued to clamour for food.

"I'll go to the refreshment counter and buy a glass of milk and a few rolls," said Shmuel to his wife.

"Have you actually some money left?" asked Sarah. "I thought it had all been spent on the picnic."

"There are just five cents over."

"Well, then go and be quick about it. The poor things are starving."

Shmuel went to the refreshment stall, and asked the price of a glass of milk and a few rolls.

"Twenty cents, mister," answered the waiter.

Shmuel started as if he had burnt his finger, and returned to his wife more crestfallen than ever.

"Well, Shlimm-mazel, where's the milk?" inquired Sarah.

"He asked twenty cents."

"Twenty cents for a glass of milk and a roll? Are you Montefiore?" Sarah could no longer contain herself. "They'll be the ruin of us! If you want to go for another picnic, we shall have to sell the bedding."

The children never stopped begging for something to eat.

"But what are we to do?" asked the bewildered Shmuel.

"Do?" screamed Sarah. "Go home, this very minute!"

Shmuel promptly caught up several children and they left the park. Sarah was quite quiet on the way home, merely remarking to her husband that she would settle her account with him later.

"I'll pay you out," she said, "for my satin dress, for the handbag, for the pineapple, for the bananas, for the

milk, for the whole blessed picnic, for the whole of my miserable existence."

"Scold away!" answered Shmuel. "It is you who were right. I don't know what possessed me. A picnic, indeed! You may well ask what next? A poor wretched workman like me has no business to think of anything beyond the shop."

Sarah, when they reached home, was as good as her word. Shmuel would have liked some supper, as he always liked it, even in slack times, but there was no supper given him. He went to bed a hungry man, and all through the night he repeated in his sleep:

"A picnic, oi, a picnic!"

The T

Just
A
keep
state

don't
spe
ref

re

The Thief 6.

By FEODOR MIKAILOVITCH DOSTOIEVSKI

JUST as I was about to leave for work one morning Agrafena—my combined cook, laundress, and house-keeper—entered my room, and, to my great astonishment, started talking.

She was such a quiet, unpretentious woman, that during all the six years of her stay with me, she had never spoken more than two or three words daily, and that in reference to my dinner—at least, I had never heard her.

"I have come to you, sir," she suddenly began, "about renting the little spare room."

"What spare room?"

"The one that is near the kitchen, of course. Where else could it be?"

"Why?"

"Why do people generally take lodgers? Just because!"

"But who will rent it?"

"Who will rent it! A lodger, of course! Who else would rent it?"

"But there's hardly enough room for a bed, mother, for even a bed; it will be too cramped. How can anyone live there?"

"But why live in it! He only wants a place to sleep; he will live on the window-seat."

"What window-seat?"

"What's that? What window-seat? As if you didn't know! The one in the hall. He will sit on it and sew, or do something else. But maybe he will sit on a chair; he has a chair of his own—and a table also, and everything."

"But who is he?"

"A nice, experienced man. I will cook for him and will charge him only three rubles in silver a month for the room and board—"

At last, after a long effort, I discovered that some elderly man had talked Agrafena into taking him as a lodger. Now when Agrafena once got anything into her head that thing

had to be done ; otherwise I knew I would have no peace. On such occasions as when things went against her wishes, she immediately fell into a sort of brooding, became exceedingly melancholy, and continued in that state for two or three weeks. During this time the food was invariably spoiled, the linen was missing, the floors unscrubbed ; in a word, a lot of unpleasantness happened. I had long ago known that this woman of such few words was almost incapable of forming a decision, or of coming to any conclusion based on her own thoughts ; yet when it happened that somehow there had formed in her weak brain a sort of idea or wish to undertake something, to refuse her permission to carry out that idea or wish meant simply to kill her morally for the time being. So, acting in the sole interest of my own peace of mind, I immediately agreed to this new proposition of hers.

"I suppose he at least has the necessary papers,—a passport, or some identification ?"

"How then ? Of course he has. A fine man like him—who has seen the world. He promised to pay three rubles a month.

On the very next day the new lodger appeared in my modest bachelor quarters ; but I did not feel annoyed in the least—on the contrary, in a way I was glad of it. I live a very solitary, hermit-like life. I have almost no acquaintance and seldom go out. Having led the existence of a moor-cock for ten years, I was naturally used to solitude. But ten, fifteen years or more of the same seclusion in company with a person like Agrafena, and in the same bachelor dwelling, was indeed a joyless prospect. Therefore, the presence of another quiet, unobtrusive man in the house was, under these circumstances, a real blessing.

Agrafena had spoken the truth : the lodger was a man who had seen much in his life. From his passport it appeared that he was a retired soldier, which I noticed even before I looked at the passport.

As soon as I glanced at him in fact.

Astafi Ivanich, my lodger, belonged to the better sort of soldiers, another thing I noticed as soon as I saw him. We liked each other from the first, and our life flowed on peacefully and comfortably. The best thing was that Astafi

Ivanich could at times tell a good story, incidents of his own life. In the general tediousness of my humdrum existence, such a narrator was a veritable treasure. Once he told me a story which has made a lasting impression upon me; but first the incident which led to the story.

Once I happened to be left alone in the house, Astafi and Agrafena having gone out on business. Suddenly I heard someone enter, and I felt that it must be a stranger; I went out into the corridor and found a man of short stature, and notwithstanding the cold weather, dressed very thinly and without an overcoat.

"What is it you want?"

"The Government clerk Alexandrov? Does he live here?"

"There is no one here by that name, little brother; good-day."

"The porter told me he lived here," said the visitor, cautiously retreating toward the door.

"Go on, go on, little brother; be off!"

Soon after dinner the next day, when Astafi brought in my coat, which he had repaired for me, I once more heard a strange step in the corridor. I opened the door.

The visitor of the day before, calmly and before my very eyes, took my short coat from the rack, put it under his arm, and ran out.

Agrafena, who had all the time been looking at him in open-mouthed surprise through the kitchen door, was seemingly unable to stir from her place and rescue the coat. But Astafi Ivanich rushed after the rascal, and, out of breath and panting, returned empty-handed. The man had vanished as if the earth had swallowed him.

"It is too bad, really, Astafi Ivanich," I said. "It is well that I have my cloak left. Otherwise the scoundrel would have put me out of service altogether."

But Astafi seemed so much affected by what had happened that as I gazed at him I forgot all about the theft. He could not regain his composure, and every once in a while threw down the work which occupied him, and began once more to recount how it had all happened, where he had been standing, while only two steps away my coat had been stolen before his very eyes, and how he could not even

catch the thief. Then once more he resumed his work, only to throw it away again, and I saw him go down to the porter, tell him what had happened, and reproach him with not taking sufficient care of the house, that such a theft could be perpetrated in it. When he returned he began to upbraid Agrafena. Then he again resumed his work, muttering to himself for a long time—how this is the way it all was—how he stood here, and I there, and how before our very eyes, no farther than two steps away, the coat was taken off its hanger, and so on. In a word, Astafi Ivanich, though he knew how to do certain things, worried a great deal over trifles. *Any thing of little value.*

"We have been fooled, Astafi Ivanich," I said to him that evening, handing him a glass of tea, and hoping from sheer ennui to call forth the story of the lost coat again, which by dint of much repetition had begun to sound extremely comical.

"Yes, we were fooled, sir. It angers me very much, though the loss is not mine, and I think there is nothing so despicably low in this world as a thief. They steal what you buy by working in the sweat of your brow—your time and labour—the loathsome creature! It sickens me to talk of it—pfui! It makes me angry to think of it. How is it, sir, that you do not seem to be at all sorry about it?"

"To be sure, Astafi Ivanich, one would much sooner see his things burn up than see a thief take them. It is exasperating—"

"Yes, it is annoying to have anything stolen from you. But of course there are thieves and thieves—I, for instance, met an honest thief through an accident."

"How is that? An honest thief? How can a thief be honest, Astafi Ivanich?"

"You speak truth, sir. A thief cannot be an honest man. There never was such. I only wanted to say that he was an honest man, it seems to me even though he stole. I was very sorry for him."

"And how did it happen, Astafi Ivanich?"

"It happened just two years ago. I was serving as house steward at the time, and the baron whom I served expected shortly to leave for his estate, so that I knew I would soon be out of a job, and then God only knew how

I would be able to get along; and just then it was that I happened to meet in a tavern a poor forlorn creature, Emelian by name. Once upon a time he had served somewhere or other, but had been driven out of service on account of tippling. Such an unworthy creature as he was! He wore whatever came along. At times I even wondered if he wore a shirt under his shabby cloak; everything he could put his hands on was sold for drink. But he was not a rowdy. Oh, no; he was of a sweet, gentle nature, very kind and tender to every one; he never asked for anything, was, if anything, too conscientious. Well, you could see without asking when the poor fellow was dying for a drink, and of course you treated him to one. Well, we became friendly, that is, he attached himself to me like a little dog—you go this way, he follows—and all this after our very first meeting.

“Of course he remained with me that night; his passport was in order and the man seemed all right. On the second night also. On the third he did not leave the house, sitting on the window-seat of the corridor the whole day, and of course he remained over that night too. Well, I thought, just see how he has forced himself upon you. You have to give him to eat and to drink and to shelter him. All a poor man needs is someone to sponge upon him. I soon found out that once before he had attached himself to a man just as he had now attached himself to me; they drank together, but the other one soon died of some deep-seated sorrow. I thought and thought. What shall I do with him? Drive him out—my conscience would not allow it—I felt very sorry for him: he was such a wretched, forlorn creature, terrible! And so dumb he did not ask for anything, only sat quietly and looked you straight in the eyes, just like a little dog. That is how drink can ruin a man. And I said to myself: Well suppose I say to him: (‘Get out of here, Emelian; you have nothing to do in here, you are a wrong person; I will soon have nothing to do with you, how do you expect me to feed you?’) And I told him what he would do after I’d told him. I saw how he would look at me for a long time after he had heard me, without understanding a word. He would understand what I was saying, but he would not understand what I was doing. He would sit on the window-seat, take his little drink—

now—a red-checked little bundle full of holes, in which he kept God knows what, and which he carted along with him wherever he went; how he would brush and fix up his worn cloak a little, so that it would look a bit more decent and not show so much the holes and patches—he was a man of very fine feelings! How he would have opened the door afterward and would have gone forth with tears in his eyes.

“Well, should a man be allowed to perish altogether? I all at once felt heartily sorry for him; but at the same time I thought: And what about me, am I any better off? And I said to myself: Well, Emelian, you will not feast over long at my expense; soon I shall have to move from here myself, and then you will not find me again. Well, sir, my baron soon left for his estate with all his household, telling me before he went that he was very well satisfied with my services, and would gladly employ me again on his return to the capital. A fine man my baron was, but he died the same year.

“Well, after I had escorted my ^{A nobleman's title.} baron and his family a little way, I took my things and the little money I had saved up, and went to live with an old woman I knew, who rented out a corner of the room she occupied by herself. She used to be a nurse in some well-to-do family, and now, in her old age, they had pensioned her off. Well, I thought to myself, now it is good-bye to you, Emelian, dear man, you will not find me now! And what do you think, sir? When I returned in the evening—I had paid a visit to an acquaintance of mine—whom should I see but Emelian sitting quietly upon my trunk with his red-checked bundle by his side. He was wrapped up in his poor little cloak, and was awaiting my home-coming. He must have been quite lonesome, because he had borrowed a prayer-book of the old woman and held it upside down. He had found me after all! My hands fell helplessly at my sides. Well, I thought, there is nothing to be done, why did I not drive him away first off? And I only asked him; ‘Have you taken your passport along, Emelian?’ Then I sat down, sir, and began to turn the matter over in my mind: Well, could he, a roving man, be much in my way? And after I had considered it well, I decided that he would not, and besides, he would be of

very little expense to me. Of course, he would have to be fed, but what does that amount to? Some bread in the morning and, to make it a little more appetizing, a little onion or so. For the midday meal again some bread and onion, and for the evening again onion and bread, and some kvass, and, if some cabbage-soup should happen to come our way, then we could both fill up to the throat. I ate little, and Emelian, who was a drinking man, surely ate almost nothing; all he wanted was vodka. He would be the undoing of me with his drinking; but at the same time I felt a curious feeling creep over me. It seemed as if life would be a burden to me if Emelian went away. And so I decided then and there to be his father-benefactor. I would put him on his legs, I thought, save him from perishing, and gradually wean him from drink. Just you wait, I thought. Stay with me, Emelian, but stand pat now. Obey the word of command!

"Well, I thought to myself, I will begin by teaching him some work, but not at once; let him first enjoy himself a bit, and I will in the meanwhile look around and discover what he finds easiest, and would be capable of doing, because you must know, sir, a man must have a calling and a capacity for a certain work to be able to do it properly. And I began stealthily to observe him. And a hard subject he was, that Emelian! At first I tried to get at him with a kind word. Thus and thus I would speak to him: 'Emelian, you had better take more care of yourself and try to fix yourself up a little.'

"Give up drinking. Just look at yourself, man, you are all ragged, your cloak looks more like a sieve than anything else. It is not nice. It is about time for you to come to your senses and know when you have had enough.'

"He listened to me, my Emelian did, with lowered head; he had already reached that state, poor fellow, when the drink affected his tongue and he could not utter a sensible word. You talk to him about cucumbers, and he answers beans. He listened, listened to me for a long time, and then he would sigh deeply.

"What are you sighing for, Emelian?' I ask him

"Oh, it is nothing, Astafi Ivanich, do not worry. Only what I saw to-day, Astafi Ivanich—~~two women fight~~

take a long deep breath

ing about a basket of huckleberries that one of them had upset by accident.'

"'Well, what of that?'

"'And the woman whose berries were scattered snatched a like basket of huckleberries from the other woman's hand, and not only threw them on the ground, but stamped all over them.'

"'Well, but what of that, Emelian?'

"'Ech!' I think to myself, 'Emelian! You have lost your poor wits through the cursed drink'

"'And again,' Emelian says, 'a baron lost a bill on the Gorokhova Street—or was it on the Sádova? A muzhik saw him drop it, and says, 'My luck,' but here another one interfered and says, 'No, it is my luck! I saw it first'

"'Well, Emelian?'

"'And the two muzhiks started a fight, Astafi Ivanich, and the upshot was that a policeman came, picked up the money, handed it back to the baron, and threatened to put the muzhiks under lock for raising a disturbance.'

"'But what of that? What is there wonderful or edifying in that, Emelian?'

"'Well, nothing, but the people laughed, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'E-ch, Emelian! What have the people to do with it?' I said. 'You have sold your immortal soul for a copper. But do you know what I will tell you, Emelian?'

"'What, Astafi Ivanich?'

"'You'd better take up some work, really you should. I am telling you for the hundredth time that you should have pity on yourself!'

"'But what should I do, Astafi Ivanich? I do not know where to begin and no one would employ me, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'That is why they drove you out of service, Emelian; it is all on account of drink!'

"'And to-day,' said Emelian, 'they called Vlass the barkeeper into the office.'

"'What did they call him for, Emelian?' I asked.

"'I don't know why, Astafi Ivanich. I suppose it was needed, so they called him.'

“‘Ech,’ I thought to myself, ‘no good will come of either of us, Emelian! It is for our sins that God is punishing us!’”

“Well, what could a body do with such a man, sir!”

“But he was sly, the fellow was, I tell you! He listened to me, listened, and at last it seems it began to tire him, and as quick as he would notice that I was growing angry he would take his cloak and slip out—and that was the last to be seen of him! He would not show up the whole day, and only in the evening would he return as drunk as a lord. Who treated him to drinks, or where he got the money for it, God only knows; not from me, surely! . . .

“‘Well,’ I say to him, ‘Emelian, you will have to give up drink, do you hear? You will have to give it up! The next time you return tipsy, you will have to sleep on the stairs. I’ll not let you in!’”

“After this Emelian kept to the house for two days; on the third he once more sneaked out. I wait and wait for him; he does not come! I must confess that I was kind of frightened; besides, I felt terribly sorry for him. What had I done to the poor devil! I thought. I must have frightened him off. Where could he have gone to now, the wretched creature? Great God, he may perish yet! The night passed and he did not return. In the morning I went out into the hall, and he was lying there with his head on the lower step, almost stiff with cold. to be here

“‘What is the matter with you, Emelian? The Lord save you! Why are you here?’”

“‘But you know, Astafi Ivanich,’ he replied, ‘you were angry with me the other day; I aggravated you, and you promised to make me sleep in the hall, and I—so I—did not dare—to come in—and lay down here.’”

“‘It would be better for you, Emelian,’ I said, filled with anger and pity, ‘to find a better employment than needlessly watching the stairs!’”

“‘But what other employment, Astafi Ivanich?’”

“‘Well, wretched creature that you are,’ here anger had flamed up in me, ‘if you would try to learn the tailoring art. Just look at the cloak you are wearing! Not only is it full of holes, but you are sweeping the stairs with it! You should at least take a needle and mend it a little, so it would

look more decent. E-ch, a wretched tippler you are, and nothing more !’

“ Well, sir ! What do you think ! He did take the needle—I had told him only for fun, and there he got scared and actually took the needle. He threw off his cloak and began to put the thread through ; well, it was easy to see what would come of it ; his eyes began to fill and reddened, his hands trembled ! He pushed and pushed the thread—could not get it through : he wetted it, rolled it between his fingers, smoothed it out, but it would not—go ! He flung it from him and looked at me.

“ ‘ Well, Emelian !’ said I, ‘ you served me right ! If people had seen it I would have died with shame ! I only told you all this for fun, and because I was angry with you. Never mind sewing ; may the Lord keep you from sin ! You need not do anything, only keep out of mischief, and do not sleep on the stairs and put me to shame thereby !’

“ ‘ But what shall I do, Astafi Ivanich ; I know myself that I am always tipsy and unfit for anything ! I only make you, my—benefactor, angry for nothing.’

“ And suddenly his bluish lips began to tremble, and a tear rolled down his unshaven, pale cheek, then another and another one, and he broke into a very flood of tears, my Emelian. Father in Heaven ! I felt as if someone had cut me over the heart with a knife.

“ ‘ E-ch you, sensitive man ; why, I never thought ! And who could have thought such a thing ! No, I’d better give you up altogether, Emelian ; do as you please.’

“ Well, sir, what else is there to tell ! But the whole thing is so insignificant and unimportant, it is really not worth while wasting words about it ; for instance, you, sir, would not give two broken groschen for it ; but I, I would give much, if I had much, that this thing had never happened ! I owned, sir, a pair of breeches, blue, in checks, a first-class article, the devil take them—a rich landowner who came here on business ordered them from me, but refused afterward to take them, saying that they were too tight, and left them with me.

“ Well, I thought, the cloth is of first-rate quality ! I can get five rubles for them in the old clothes market-place, and, if not, I can cut a fine pair of pantaloons out of them

THE THIEF

for some St. Petersburg gent, and have a piece left over for a vest for myself. Everything counts with a poor man! And Emelian was at that time in sore straits. I saw that he had given up drinking, first one day, then a second, and a third, and looked so downhearted and sad.

"Well, I thought, it is either that the poor fellow lacks the necessary coin or maybe he has entered on the right path, and has at last listened to good sense.

"Well, to make a long story short, an important holiday came just at that time, and I went to vespers. When I came back I saw Emelian sitting on the window-seat as drunk as a lord. Eh! I thought, so that is what you are about! And I go to my trunk to get out something I needed. I look! The breeches are not there. I rummage about in this place and that place: gone! Well, after I had searched all over and saw that they were missing for fair, I felt as if something had gone through me! I went after the old woman—as to Emelian, though there was evidence against him in his being drunk, I somehow never thought of him!

"No," says my old woman; "the good Lord keep you, gentleman, what do I need breeches for? can I wear them? I myself missed a skirt the other day. I know nothing at all about it."

"Well," I asked, "has anyone called here?"

"No one called," she said. "I was in all the time; your friend here went out for a short while and then came back; here he sits! Why don't you ask him?"

"Did you happen, for some reason or other, Emelian, to take the breeches out of the trunk? The ones, you remember, which were made for the landowner?"

"No," he says, "I have not taken them, Astafi Ivanich."

"What could have happened to them?" Again I an to search, but nothing came of it! And Emelian sat swayed to and fro on the window-seat.

"I was on my knees before the open trunk, just in of him. Suddenly I threw a side-long glance at him. I thought, and felt very hot round the heart, and my rew very red. Suddenly my eyes encountered Emelian's.

"No," he says, "Astafi Ivanich. You perhaps think you know what I mean—but I have not taken them."

“‘But where have they gone, Emelian?’

“‘No,’ he says, ‘Astafi Ivanich, I have not seen them at all.’

“‘Well, then, you think they simply went and got lost by themselves, Emelian?’

“‘Maybe they did, Astafi Ivanich.’

“After this I would not waste another word on him. I rose remarking a vest for a Government clerk, who lived on the floor below. But I was terribly rattled, just the same. It would have been much easier to bear, I thought, if all my wardrobe had burned to ashes. Emelian, it seems, felt that I was deeply angered. It is always so, sir, when a man is guilty; he always feels beforehand when trouble approaches, as a bird feels the coming storm.

“‘And do you know, Astafi Ivanich,’ he suddenly began, ‘the doctor married the coachman’s widow to-day.’

“I just looked at him; but, it seems looked at him so angrily that he understood: I saw him rise from his seat, approach the bed, and begin to rummage in it, continually repeating: ‘Where could they have gone, vanished, as if the devil had taken them!’

“I waited to see what was coming; I saw that my Emelian had crawled under the bed. I could contain myself no longer.

“‘Look here,’ I said. ‘What makes you crawl under the bed?’

“‘I am looking for the breeches, Astafi Ivanich,’ said Emelian from under the bed. ‘Maybe they got here somehow or other.’

“‘But what makes you, sir (in my anger I addressed him as if he was—somebody), what makes you trouble yourself on account of such a plain man as I am; dirtying your knees for nothing!’

“‘But, Astafi Ivanich—I did not mean anything—I only thought maybe if we look for them here we may find them yet’

“‘Mm! Just listen to me a moment, Emelian!’

“‘What, Astafi Ivanich?’

“‘Have you not simply stolen them from me like a rascally thief, serving me so for my bread and salt?’ I said

to him, beside myself with wrath at the sight of him crawling under the bed for something he knew was not there.

“‘No, Astafi Ivanich.’ For a long time he remained lying flat under the bed. Suddenly he crawled out and stood before me—I seem to see him even now—as terrible a sight as sin itself.

“‘No,’ he says to me in a trembling voice, shivering through all his body and pointing to his breast with his finger, so that all at once I became scared and could not move from my seat on the window. ‘I have not taken your breeches, Astafi Ivanich.’

“‘Well,’ I answered, ‘Emelian, forgive me if in my foolishness I have accused you wrongfully. As to the breeches, let them go hang; we will get along without them. We have our hands, thank God, we will not have to steal, and now, too, we will not have to sponge on another poor man; we will earn our living.’

“Emelian listened to me and remained standing before me for some time, then he sat down and sat motionless the whole evening; when I lay down to sleep he was still sitting in the same place.

“In the morning, when I awoke, I found him sleeping on the bare floor, wrapped up in his cloak; he felt his humiliation so strongly that he had no heart to go and lie down on the bed.

“Well, sir, from that day on I conceived a terrible dislike for the man; that is, rather, I hated him the first few days, feeling as if, for instance, my own son had robbed me and given me deadly offense. Ech, I thought, Emelian, Emelian! And Emelian, my dear sir, had gone on a two weeks’ spree. Drunk to bestiality from morning till night. And during the whole two weeks he had not uttered a word. I suppose he was consumed the whole time by a deep-seated grief, or else he was trying in this way to make an end to himself. At last he gave up drinking. I suppose he had no longer the wherewithal to buy vodka—had drunk up every copeck—and he once more took up his old place on the window-seat. I remember that he sat there for three whole days without a word; suddenly I see him weep; sits there and cries, but what crying! The tears come from his eyes in showers, drip, drip, as if he did not know that

NINETEEN SHORT STORIES

he was shedding them. It is very painful, sir, to see a grown man weep, all the more when the man is of advanced years, like Emelian, and cries from grief and a sorrowful heart.

“‘What ails you, Emelian?’ I say to him.

“‘He starts and shivers. This was the first time I had spoken to him since that eventful day.

“‘It is nothing—Astafi Ivanich.’

“‘God keep you, Emelian; never you mind it all. Let bygones. Don’t take it to heart so, man!’ I felt very sorry for him.

“‘It is only that—that I would like to do something—some kind of work, Astafi Ivanich.’

“‘But what kind of work, Emelian?’

“‘Oh, any kind. Maybe I will go into some kind of service, as before. I have already been at my former employer’s asking. It will not do for me, Astafi Ivanich, to use you any longer. I, Astafi Ivanich, will perhaps obtain some employment, and then I will pay you for everything, food and all.’

“‘Don’t, Emelian, don’t. Well, let us say you committed a sin; well, it is over! The devil take it all! Let us live as before—as if nothing had happened!’

“‘You, Astafi Ivanich, you are probably hinting about that. But I have not taken your breeches.’

“‘Well, just as you please, Emelian!’

“‘No, Astafi Ivanich, evidently I cannot live with you longer. You will excuse me, Astafi Ivanich.’

“‘But God be with you, Emelian,’ I said to him; ‘who is it that is offending you or driving you out of the house? Is it I who am doing it?’

“‘No, but it is unseemly for me to misuse your hospitality any longer, Astafi Ivanich; ‘twill be better to go.’

“‘I saw that he had in truth risen from his place and donned his ragged cloak—he felt offended, the man did, and had gotten it into his head to leave, and—basta.

“‘But where are you going, Emelian? Listen to sense. What are you? Where will you go?’

“‘No, it is best so, Astafi Ivanich, do not try to keep me back,’ and he once more broke into tears; ‘let me be, Astafi Ivanich, you are no longer what you used to be.’

“‘Why am I not? I am just the same. But you will perish when left alone—like a foolish little child, Emelian.’

“No, Astafi Ivanich. Lately, before you leave the house, you have taken to locking your trunk, and I, Astafi Ivanich, see it and weep. No, it is better you should let me go, Astafi Ivanich, and forgive me if I have offended you in any way during the time we have lived together.”

“Well, sir! And so he did go away. I waited a day and thought: Oh, he will be back toward evening. But a day passes, then another, and he does not return. On the third—he does not return. I grew frightened, and a terrible sadness gripped at my heart. I stopped eating and drinking, and lay whole nights without closing my eyes. The man had wholly disarmed me! On the fourth day I went to look for him; I looked in all the taverns and pot-houses in the vicinity, and asked if anyone had seen him. No, Emelian had wholly disappeared! Maybe he has done away with his miserable existence, I thought. Maybe, when in his cups, he has perished like a dog, somewhere under a fence. I came home half dead with fatigue and despair, and decided to go out the next day again to look for him cursing myself bitterly for letting the foolish, helpless man go away from me. But at dawn of the fifth day (it was a holiday) I heard the door creak. And whom should I see but Emelian! But in what a state! His face was bluish and his hair was full of mud, as if he had slept in the street; and he had grown thin, the poor fellow had, as thin as a rail. He took off his poor cloak, sat down on my trunk, and began to look at me. Well, sir, I was overjoyed, but at the same time felt a greater sadness than ever pulling at my heart-strings. This is how it was, sir: I felt that if a thing like that had happened to me, that is—I would sooner have perished like a dog, but would not have returned. And Emelian did. Well, naturally, it is hard to see a man in such a state. I began to coddle and to comfort him in every way.”

“Well, I said, ‘Emelian, I am very glad you have returned; if you had not come so soon, you would not have found me in, as I intended to go hunting for you. Have you had anything to eat?’

“I have eaten, Astafi Ivanich.”

“I doubt it. Well, here is some cabbage soup—left over from yesterday; a nice soup with some meat in it—not

the meagre kind. And here you have some bread and a little onion. Go ahead and eat; it will do you good.'

"I served it to him; and immediately realized that he must have been starving for the last three days—such an appetite as he showed! So it was hunger that had driven him back to me. Looking at the poor fellow, I was deeply touched, and decided to run into the nearby dram-shop. I will get him some vodka, I thought, to liven him up a bit and make peace with him. It is enough. I have nothing against the poor devil any longer. And so I brought the vodka and said to him: 'Here, Emelian, let us drink to each other's health in honour of the holiday. Come, take a drink. It will do you good.'

"He stretched out his hand, greedily stretched it out, you know, and stopped; then, after a while, he lifted the glass, carried it to his mouth, spilling the liquor on his sleeve; at last he did carry it to his mouth, but immediately put it back on the table.

"'Well, why don't you drink, Emelian?'

"'But no, I'll not, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'You'll not drink it!'

"'But I, Astafi Ivanich, I think—I'll not drink any more, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'Is it for good you have decided to give it up, Emelian, or only for to-day?'

"He did not reply, and after a while I saw him lean his head on his hand, and I asked him: 'Are you not feeling well, Emelian?'

"'Yes, pretty well, Astafi Ivanich.'

"I made him go to bed, and saw that he was truly in a bad way. His head was burning hot and he was shivering with ague. I sat by him the whole day; toward evening he grew worse. I prepared a meal for him of kvass, butter, and some onion, and threw in it a few bits of bread, and said to him: 'Go ahead and take some food; maybe you will feel better!'

"But he only shook his head; 'No, Astafi Ivanich, I shall not have any dinner to-day.'

"I had some tea prepared for him, giving a lot of trouble to the poor old woman from whom I rented a part of the room—but he would not take even a little tea.

*A kind of Astafi Ivanich's accompaniment
with shivering (25/205)*

"Well, I thought to myself, it is a bad case. On the third morning, I went to see the doctor, an acquaintance of mine, Dr. Kostopravov, who had treated me when I still lived in my last place. The doctor came, examined the poor fellow, and only said: 'There was no need of sending for me, he is already too far gone, but you can give him some powders which I will prescribe.'

"Well, I didn't give him the powders at all, as I understood that the doctor was only doing it for form's sake; and in the meanwhile came the fifth day.

"He lay dying before me, sir. I sat on the window-seat with some work I had on hand lying on my lap. The old woman was raking the stove. We were all silent, and my heart was breaking over this poor, shiftless creature, as if he were my own son whom I was losing. I knew that Emelian was gazing at me all the time; I noticed from the earliest morning that he longed to tell me something, but seemingly dared not. At last I looked at him, and saw that he did not take his eyes from me, but that whenever his eyes met mine, he immediately lowered his own.

"'Astafi Ivanich!'

"'What, Emelian?'

"'What if my cloak should be carried over to the old clothes market, would they give much for it, Astafi Ivanich?'

"'Well, I said, 'I do not know for certain, but three rubles they would probably give for it, Emelian.' I said it only to comfort the simple-minded creature; in reality they would have laughed in my face for even thinking to sell such a miserable, ragged thing.

"'And I thought that they might give a little more, Astafi Ivanich. It is made of cloth, so how is it that they would not wish to pay more than three rubles for it?'

"'Well, Emelian, if you wish to sell it, then of course you may ask more for it at first.'

"Emelian was silent for a moment, then he once more called to me.

"'Astafi Ivanich!'

"'What is it, Emelian?'

"'You will sell the cloak after I am no more; no need of burying me in it, I can well get along without it; it is worth something, and may come handy to you.'

"Here I felt such a painful gripping at my heart as I cannot even express, sir. I saw that the sadness of approaching death had already come upon the man. Again we were silent for some time. About an hour passed in this way. I looked at him again and saw that he was still gazing at me, and when his eyes met mine he immediately lowered his.

"'Would you like a drink of cold water?' I asked him.

"'Give me some, and may God repay you, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'Would you like anything else, Emelian?'

"'No, Astafi Ivanich, I do not want anything, but I—'

"'What?'

"'You know that—'

"'What is it you want, Emelian?'

"'The breeches—you know—It was I who took them—Astafi Ivanich—'

"'Well,' I said, 'the great God will forgive you, Emelian, poor, unfortunate fellow that you are! Depart in peace.'

"And I had to turn away my head for a moment because grief for the poor devil took my breath away and the tears came in torrents from my eyes.

"'Astafi Ivanich!—'

"I looked at him, saw that he wished to tell me something more, tried to raise himself, and was moving his lips. He reddened and looked at me. Suddenly I saw that he began to grow paler and paler; in a moment he fell with his head thrown back, breathed once, and gave his soul into God's keeping."

The Pyramids 7

By MARK TWAIN

AT the distance of a few miles the Pyramids, rising above the palms, looked very clean-cut, very grand and imposing, and very soft and filmy, as well. They swam in a rich haze that took from them all suggestions of unfeeling stone, and made them seem only the airy nothings of a dream—structures which might blossom into tears of vague arches, or ornate colonnades, maybe, and change and change again, into all graceful forms of architecture, while we looked, and then melt deliciously away and blend with the tremulous atmosphere.

At the end of the levee we left the mules and went in a sail-boat across an arm of the Nile or an overflow, and landed where the sands of the Great Sahara left their embankment, as straight as a wall, along the verge of the alluvial plain of the river. A laborious walk in the flaming sun brought us to the foot of the great Pyramid of Cheops. It was a fairy vision no longer. It was a corrugated, unsightly mountain of stone. Each of its monstrous sides was a wide stairway which rose upward, step above step, narrowing as it went, till it tapered to a point far aloft in the air. Insect men and women—pilgrims from the *S.S. Quaker City*—were creeping about its dizzy perches, and one little black swarm were waving postage stamps from the airy summit—handkerchiefs will be understood.

Of course, we were besieged by a rabble of muscular Egyptians and Arabs who wanted the contract of dragging us to the top—all tourists are. Of course, you could not hear your own voice for the din that was around you. Of course, the Sheiks said *they* were the only responsible parties; that all contracts must be made with them, all moneys paid over to them, and none exacted from us by any but themselves alone. Of course, they contracted that the varlets who dragged us up should not mention *baksheesh* once. For such is the usual routine. Of course, we contracted with them, paid them, were delivered into the hands of the draggers, dragged up the Pyramids

Mule = 27/100 = a stupid obstinate person
728 537 71007

and harried and bedevilled for *backsheesh* from the foundation clear to the summit. We paid it, too, for we were purposely spread very far apart over the vast side of the Pyramid. There was no help near if we called, and the Herculeses who dragged us had a way of asking sweetly and flatteringly for *backsheesh*, which was seductive, and of looking fierce and threatening to throw us down the precipice, which was persuasive and convincing.

Each step being full as high as a dinner-table; there being very, very many of the steps; an Arab having hold of each of our arms and springing upward from step to step and snatching us with them, forcing us to lift our feet as high as our breasts every time, and do it rapidly and keep it up till we were ready to faint, who shall say it is not lively, exhilarating, lacerating, muscle-straining, bone-wrenching and perfectly excruciating and exhausting pastime, climbing the Pyramids? I beseeched the Arabs not to twist *all* my joints asunder; I iterated, reiterated, even *swore* to them that I did not wish to beat anybody to the top; did all I could to convince them that if I got there the last of all I would feel blessed above men and grateful to them for ever; I begged them, prayed them, pleaded with them to let me stop and rest a moment—only one little moment: and they only answered with some more frightful springs, and an unenlisted volunteer behind opened a bombardment of determined boosts with his head which threatened to batter my whole political economy to rack and ruin.

Twice, for one minute, they let me rest while they extorted *backsheesh*, and then continued their maniac flight up the Pyramid. They wished to beat the other parties. It was nothing to them that I, a stranger, must be sacrificed upon the altar of their unholy ambition. But in the midst of sorrow, joy blooms. Even in this dark hour I had a sweet consolation. For I knew that except these Mohammedans repented they would go straight to destruction some day. And *they* never repent—they never forsake their paganism. This thought calmed me, cheered me, and I sank down limp and exhausted, upon the summit, but happy, *so* happy and serene within.

On the one hand, a mighty sea of yellow sand stretched away toward the ends of the earth, solemn, silent, shorn of

vegetation, its solitude uncheered by any forms of creature life; on the other, the Eden of Egypt was spread below us—a broad green floor, cloven by the sinuous river, dotted with villages, its vast distances measured and marked by the diminishing stature of receding clusters of palms. It lay asleep in an enchanted atmosphere. There was no sound, no motion. Above the date plumes in the middle distance, swelled a domed and pinnacled mass, glimmering through a tinted, exquisite mist; away toward the horizon a dozen shapely pyramids watched over ruined Memphis; and at our feet the bland impassable Sphynx looked out upon the picture from her throne in the sands as placidly and pensively as she had looked upon its like full fifty lagging centuries ago.

We suffered torture no pen can describe from the hungry appeals for *backsheesh* that gleamed from Arab eyes and poured incessantly from Arab lips. Why try to call up the traditions of vanished Egyptian grandeur; why try to fancy Egypt following dead Rameses to his tomb in the Pyramid, or the long multitude of Israel departing over the desert yonder? Why try to think at all? The thing was impossible. One must bring his meditations cut and dried, or else cut and dry them afterward.

The traditional Arab proposed, in the traditional way, to run down Cheops, cross the eighth of a mile of sand intervening between it and the tall pyramid of Cephron, ascend to Cephron's summit and return to us on the top of Cheops—all in nine minutes by the watch, and the whole service to be rendered for a single dollar. In the first flush of irritation, I was opposed to giving aid and comfort to this infidel. But stay. The upper third of Cephron was coated with dressed marble, smooth as glass. A blessed thought entered my brain. He must infallibly break his neck. We closed the contract with despatch, and let him go. He started. We watched. He went bounding down the vast broadside, spring after spring, like an ibex. He grew small and smaller till he became a bobbing pigmy, away down toward the bottom—then disappeared. We turned and peered over the other side—forty seconds—eighty seconds—a hundred—happiness, he is dead already!—two minutes—and a quarter—"There he goes!" Too true—it was too true. He was very small now. Gradually, but surely, he overcame the level

ground. He began to spring and climb again. Up, up, up—at last he reached the smooth coating—now for it. But he clung to it with toes and fingers, like a fly. He crawled this way and that—away to the right, slanting upward—away to the left, still slanting upward—and stood at last, a black peg on the summit, and waved his pigmy scarf! Then he crept downward to the raw steps again then picked up his agile heels and flew. We lost him presently. But presently again we saw him under us, mounting with diminished energy. Shortly he bounded into our midst with a gallant war-whoop. Time, eight minutes, forty-one seconds. He had won. His bones were intact. It was failure. I reflected. I said to myself, he is tired, and must grow dizzy. I will risk another dollar on him.

He started again. Made the trip again. Slipped on the smooth coating—I almost had him. But an infamous crevice saved him. He was with us once more—perfectly sound. Time, eight minutes, forty-six seconds.

I said to Dan, "Lend me a dollar—I can beat this game yet."

Worse and worse. He won again. Time, eight minutes, forty-eight seconds. I was out of all patience now. I was desperate. Money was no longer of any consequence. I said, "Son of the Prophet, I will give you a hundred dollars to jump off this pyramid head first. If you do not like the terms, name your bet. I stand on expenses no longer. I will stay here and risk money on you as long as Dan has got a cent."

I was in a fair way to win now, for it was dazzling opportunity for an Arab. He pondered a moment, and would have done it, I think, but his mother arrived then, and interfered. Her tears moved me—I never can look upon the tears of women with indifference—and I said I would give her a hundred to jump off too.

But it was a failure. The Arabs are too high-priced in Egypt. They put on airs unbecoming to such savages.

We descended, hot and out of humour. The dragoman lit candles, and we all entered a hole near the base of the pyramid, attended by a crazy rabble of Arabs who thrust their services upon us uninvited. They dragged us up a long inclined chute, and dripped candle-grease all over us. This chute was not more than twice as wide and high as a fashion-

able lady's trunk, and was walled, roofed and floored with solid blocks of Egyptian granite as wide as a wardrobe, twice as thick and three times as long. We kept on climbing through the oppressive gloom, till I thought we ought to be nearing the top of the pyramid again, and then came to the "Queen's Chamber," and shortly to the chamber of the king. These large apartments were tombs. The walls were built of monstrous masses of smoothed granite, neatly joined together. Some of them were nearly as large and square as an ordinary parlour. A great stone sarcophagus like a bathtub stood in the centre of the King's Chamber. Around it were gathered a picturesque group of Arab savages and soiled and tattered pilgrims, who held their candles aloft in the gloom while they chattered, and the winking blurs of light shed a dim glory down upon one of the irrepressible momento-seekers who was pecking at the venerable sarcophagus with his sacrilegious hammer.

We struggled out to the open air and the bright sunshine, and for the space of thirty minutes received ragged Arabs by couples, dozens and platoons, and paid them *backsheesh* for services they swore and proved by each other that they had rendered, but which we had not been aware before—and as each party was paid, they dropped into the rear of the procession and in due time arrived again with a newly-invented delinquent list for liquidation.

We lunched in the shade of the pyramid, in the midst of this encroaching and unwelcome company, and then Dan and Jack and I started away for a walk. A howling swarm of natives followed us—surrounded us—almost headed us off. A sheik, in flowing white bournous and gaudy head-gear, was with them. He wanted more *backsheesh*. But we had adopted a new code—it was millions for defence, but not a cent for *backsheesh*. I asked him if he could persuade the others to depart if we paid him. He said yes—for ten francs. We accepted the contract, and said—

"Now persuade your vassals to fall back."

He swung his long staff round his head and three Arabs bit the dust. He capered among the mob like a maniac. His blows fell like hail, and wherever one fell a subject went down. We had to hurry to the rescue and tell him it was only necessary to damage them a little, he need

not kill them. In two minutes we were alone with the sheik, and remained so. The persuasive powers of this illiterate savage were remarkable.

Each side of the Pyramid of Cheops extends seven hundred and some odd feet. It is about seventy-five feet higher than the cross on St. Peter's. The first time I ever went down the Mississippi, I thought the highest bluff on the river between St. Louis and New Orleans—it was near Selma, Missouri—was probably the highest mountain in the world. It is four hundred and thirteen feet high. It still looms in my memory with undiminished grandeur. I can still see the trees and bushes growing smaller and smaller as I followed them up its huge slant with my eye, till they became a feathery fringe on the distant summit. This symmetrical Pyramid of Cheops—this solid mountain of stone reared by the patient hands of men—this mighty tomb of a forgotten monarch—dwarfs my cherished mountain. For it is four hundred and eighty feet high. In still earlier years than those I have been recalling, Holidays Hill, in our town, was to me the noblest work of God. It appeared to pierce the skies. It was nearly three hundred feet high. In those days I pondered the subject much, but I never could understand why it did not swathe its summit with never-failing clouds, and crown its majestic brow with everlasting snows. I had heard that such was the custom of great mountains in other parts of the world. I remembered how I worked with another boy, at odd afternoons stolen from study and paid for with stripes, to undermine and start from its bed an immense boulder that rested upon the edge of that hill-top; I remembered how, one Saturday afternoon, we gave three hours of honest effort to the task, and saw at last that our reward was at hand; I remember how we sat down, then, and wiped the perspiration away, and waited to let a picnic party get out of the way in the road below—and then we started the boulder. It was splendid. It went crashing down the hillside, tearing up saplings, mowing bushes down like grass, ripping and crushing and smashing everything in its path—splintered and scattered a wood pile at the foot of the hill, and then sprung from the high bank clear over a dray in the road—the negro glanced up once and dodged—and the next second it made infinitesimal mincemeat of a frame cooper's shop, and the coopers swarmed

THE PYRAMIDS

out like bees. Then we said it was perfectly mag-
left. Because the coopers were starting up the hi-

Still, that mountain, prodigious as it was,
to the Pyramid of Cheops. I could conjure up no
that would convey to my mind a satisfactory co-
of the magnitude of a pile of monstrous stones
thirteen acres of ground and stretched upward f-
and eighty tiresome feet, and so I gave it up
down to the Sphynx.

After years of waiting, it was before me
great face was so sad, so earnest, so longing, so p-
was a dignity not of earth in its mien, and in its
a benignity such as never anything human wore.
but it seemed sentient. If ever image of stone th-
thinking. It was looking toward the verge of th-
yet looking *at* nothing—nothing but distance and
was looking over and beyond everything of the pr-
into the past. It was gazing out over the ocean
over lines of century-waves which, further
receding, closed nearer and nearer together, and
last into one unbroken tide, away toward the
remote antiquity. It was thinking of the wars
ages ; of the empires it had seen created and d-
the nations whose birth it had witnessed, whos-
had watched, whose annihilation it had noted
and sorrow, the life and death, the grandeur a-
five thousand slow revolving years. It was the
attribute of man—of a faculty of his heart and
MEMORY—RETROSPECTION—wrought i-
tangible form. All who know what pathos there
ries of days that are accomplished and faces that h-
—albeit only a trifling score of years gone by
some appreciation of the pathos that dwells in
eyes that look so steadfastly back upon the thing
before History was born—before Tradition b-
things that were, and forms that moved, in a vag-
even Poetry and Romance scarce know of—and
by one away and left the stony dreamer solitary
of a strange new age, and uncomprehended scen-

The Sphynx is grand in its loneliness ; it is
its magnitude ; it is impressive in the mystery tha-

with the
of this
Is seven
five feet
e I ever
I on the
as near
in the
I looms
still see
followed
feathery
mid of
patient
reh-
red and
ve been
noblest
is nearly
e subject
swathe
majestic
was the
world. I
ld after-
o under-
at rested
ow, one
effort to
hand ; I
respiration
ray in the
splendid
saplings
shing and
cattered a
m the high
ed up once
nal mace-
swarmed

its story. And there is that in the overshadowing majesty of this eternal figure of stone, with its accusing memory of the deeds of all ages, which reveals to one something of what he shall feel when he shall stand at last in the awful presence of God.

There are some things which, for the credit of America, should be left unsaid, perhaps ; but these very things happen sometimes to be the very things which, for the real benefit of Americans, ought to have prominent notice. While we stood looking, a wart, or an excrescence of some kind, appeared on the jaw of the Sphinx. We heard the familiar clink of a hammer, and understood the case at once. One of our well-meaning reptiles—I mean relic hunters—had crawled up there and was trying to break a “specimen” from the face of this the most majestic creation the hand of man has wrought. But the great image contemplated the Dead Ages as calmly as ever, unconscious of the small insect that was fretting at its jaw. Egyptian granite that has defied the storms and earthquakes of all time has nothing to hear from the tack-hammers of ignorant excursionists—highwaymen like this specimen. He failed in his enterprise. We sent a sheik to arrest him if he had the authority, or to warn him, if he had not, that by the laws of Egypt the crime he was attempting to commit was punishable with imprisonment or the bastinado. Then he desisted and went away.

Something interfered, and we did not visit the Red Sea and walk upon the sands of Arabia. I shall not describe the great mosque of Mehemet Ali, whose entire inner walls are built of polished and glistening alabaster ; I shall not tell how the little birds have built their nests in the globes of the great chandeliers that hang in the mosque, and how they fill the whole place with their music and are not afraid of anybody because their audacity is pardoned, their rights are respected, and nobody is allowed to interfere with them, even though the mosque be thus doomed to go unlighted ; I certainly shall not tell the hackneyed story of the massacre of the Mamlukes, because I am glad the lawless rascals were massacred, and I do not wish to get up any sympathy in their behalf ; I shall not tell how that one solitary Mameluke jumped his horse a hundred feet down from the battlements of the citadel and escaped, because I do not think much of

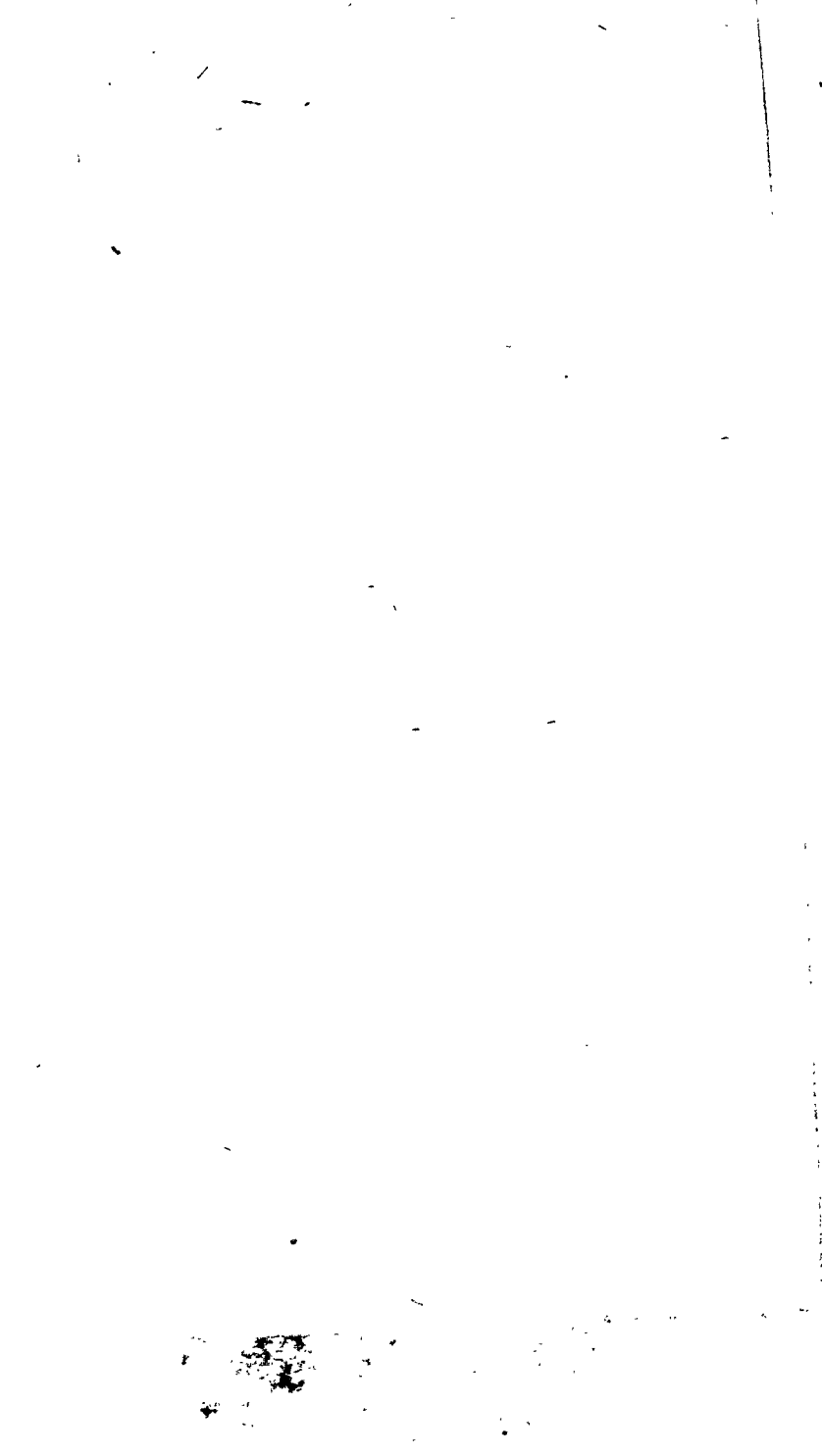
that—I could have done it myself ; I shall not tell of Joseph's well which he dug in the solid rock of the citadel hill and which is still as good as new, nor how the same mules he bought to draw up the water (with an endless chain) are still at it yet and are getting tired of it too ; I shall not tell about Joseph's granaries which he built to store the grain in, what time the Egyptian brokers were "selling short," unwitting that there would be no corn in all the land when it should be time for them to deliver ; I shall not tell anything about the strange, strange city of Cairo, because it is only a repetition, a good deal intensified and exaggerated, of the Oriental cities I have already spoken of ; I shall not tell of the Great Caravan which leaves for Mecca every year, for I did not see it ; nor of the fashion the people have of prostrating themselves and so forming a long human pavement to be ridden over by the chief of the expedition on its return, to the end that their salvation may be thus secured, for I did not see that either ; I shall not speak of the railway, for it is like any other railway—I shall only say that the fuel they use for the locomotive is composed of mummies three thousand years old, purchased by the ton or by the graveyard for that purpose, and that sometimes one hears the profane engineer call out pettishly, "D——n these plebeians, they don't burn worth a cent—pass out a King ! "* I shall not tell of the groups of mud cones stuck like wasps' nests upon a thousand mounds above high-water-mark the length and breadth of Egypt—villages of the lower classes ; I shall not speak of the boundless sweep of level plain, green with luxuriant grain, that gladdens the eye as far as it can pierce through the soft, rich atmosphere of Egypt ; I shall not speak of the vision of the Pyramids seen at a distance of five and twenty miles, for the picture is too ethereal to be limned by an uninspired pen ; I shall not tell of the crowds of dusky women who flocked to the cars when they stopped a moment at a station, to sell us a drink of water or a ruddy, juicy pomegranate ; I shall not tell of the motley multitudes and wild costumes that graced a fair we found in full blast at another barbarous station ; I shall not tell how we feasted on fresh dates and

*Stated to me for a fact. I only tell it as I got it. I am willing to believe it. I can believe anything.

enjoyed the pleasant landscape all through the flying journey; nor how we thundered into Alexandria, at last, swarmed out of the cars, rowed aboard the ship, left a comrade behind (who was to return to Europe, thence home), raised the anchor, and turned our bows homeward finally and for ever from the long voyage; nor how, as the mellow sun went down upon the oldest land on earth, Jack and Moulton assembled in solemn state in the smoking-room and mourned over the lost comrade the whole night long, and would not be comforted. I shall not speak a word of any of these things, or write a line. They shall be as a sealed book. I do not know what a sealed book is, because I never saw one, but a sealed book is the expression to use in this connection, because it is popular.

We were glad to have seen the land which was a mother of civilization—which taught Greece her letters, and through Greece Rome, and through Rome the world; the land which could have humanized and civilized the hapless children of Israël, but allowed them to depart out of her borders little better than savages. We were glad to have seen that land which had an enlightened religion with future eternal rewards and punishment in it, while even Israel's religion contained no promise of a hereafter. We were glad to have seen that land which had glass three thousand years before England had it, and could paint upon it as none of us can paint now; that land which knew, three thousand years ago, well-nigh all of medicine and surgery which science has *discovered* lately; which had all those curious surgical instruments which science has *invented* recently; which had in high excellence a thousand luxuries and necessities of an advanced civilization which we have gradually contrived and accumulated in modern times and claimed as things that were new under the sun; that had paper untold centuries before we dreamt of it—and waterfalls before our women thought of them; that had a perfect system of common schools so long before we boasted of our achievements in that direction that it seems for ever and for ever ago; that embalmed the dead that flesh was made almost immortal—which we cannot do; that built temples which mock at destroying time and smile grimly upon our lauded little prodigies of architecture; that old land that knew all which we know now, perchance,

and more ; that walked in the broad highway of civilization in the grey dawn of creation, ages and ages before we were born ; that left the impress of exalted, cultivated Mind upon the eternal front of the Sphinx to confound all scoffers who, when all her other proofs had passed away, might seek to persuade the world that imperial Egypt, in the days of her high renown, had groped in darkness.



The House of Eulalie 8

By HENRY HARLAND

IT was a pretty little house, in very charming country—in an untravelled corner of Normandy, near the sea; a country of orchards and colza-fields, of soft green meadows where cattle browsed, and of deep elm-shaded lanes.

One was rather surprised to see this little house just here, for all the other houses in the neighbourhood were rude farmhouses or labourers' cottages; and this was a coquettish little chalet, white-walled, with slim French windows, and balconies of twisted ironwork, and Venetian blinds; a gay little pleasure-house, standing in a bright little garden, among rose-bushes, and parterres of geraniums, and smooth stretches of greensward. Beyond the garden there was an orchard—rows and couples of old gnarled apple-trees, bending towards one another like fantastic figures arrested in the middle of a dance. Then, turning round, you looked over feathery colza-fields and yellow corn-fields, a mile away, to the sea, and to a winding perspective of white cliffs, which the sea bathed in transparent greens, and purples, luminous shadows of its own nameless hues.

A board attached to the wall confirmed, in roughly-painted characters, the information I had had from an agent in Dieppe. The house was to let; and I had driven out—a drive of two long hours—to inspect it. Now I stood on the doorstep and rang the bell. It was a big bell, hung in the porch, with a pendent handle of bronze, wrought in the semblance of a rope and tassel. Its voice would carry far on that still country air.

It carried, at any rate, as far as a low thatched farmhouse, a hundred yards down the road. Presently a man and a woman came out of the farmhouse, gazed for an instant in my direction, and then moved towards me; an old brown man, an old grey woman, the man in corduroys, the woman wearing a neat white cotton cap and a blue apron, both moving with the burdened gait of peasants.

"You are Monsieur and Madame Leroux?" I asked, when we had accomplished our preliminary good-days; and I explained that I had come from the agent in Dieppe to look over their house. For the rest they must have been expecting me; the agent had said that he would let them know.

But, to my perplexity, this business-like announcement seemed somehow to embarrass them; even, I might have thought, to agitate, to distress them. They lifted up their worn old faces, and eyed me anxiously. They exchanged anxious glances with each other. The woman clasped her hands, nervously working her fingers. The man hesitated and stammered a little, before he was able to repeat vaguely, "You have come to look over the house, Monsieur?"

"Surely," I said, "the agent has written to you? I understood from him that you would expect me at this hour to-day."

"Oh yes," the man admitted, "we were expecting you." But he made no motion to advance matters. He exchanged another anxious glance with his wife. She gave her head a sort of helpless nod, and looked down.

"You see, Monsieur," the man began, as if he were about to elucidate the situation, "you see——." But then he faltered, frowning at the air, as one at a loss for words.

"The house is already let, perhaps?" suggested I.

"No, the house is not let," said he.

"You had better go and fetch the key," his wife said at last, in a dreary way, still looking down.

He trudged heavily back to the farmhouse. While he was gone we stood by the door in silence, the woman always nervously working the fingers of her clasped hands. I tried, indeed, to make a little conversation: I ventured something about the excellence of the seaside, the beauty of the view. She replied with a murmur of assent, civilly but wearily; and I did not feel encouraged to persist.

By and by her husband rejoined us, with the key; and they began silently to lead me through the house.

There were two pretty drawing-rooms on the ground floor, a pretty dining-room, and a delightful kitchen, with a broad hearth of polished red bricks, a tiled chimney, and shining copper pots and pans. The drawing-rooms and the dining-room were pleasantly furnished in a light French

fashion, and their windows opened to the sun and to the fragrance and greenery of the garden. I expressed a good deal of admiration; whereupon, little by little, the manner of my conductors changed. From constrained, depressed, it became responsive; even in the end, effusive. They met my exclamations with smiles, my inquiries with voluble eager answers. But it remained an agitated manner, the manner of people who were shaken by an emotion. Their old hands trembled as they opened the doors for me or drew up the blinds; their voices trembled. There was something painful in their very smiles, as if these were but momentary ripples on the surface of a trouble.

"Ah," I said to myself, "they are hard-pressed for money. They have put their whole capital into this house, very likely. They are excited by the prospect of securing a tenant."

"Now, if you please, Monsieur, we will go upstairs, and see the bedrooms," the old man said. The bedrooms were airy, cheerful rooms, gaily papered, with chintz curtains and usual French bedroom furniture. One of them exhibited signs of being actually lived in; there were things about it, personal things, a woman's things. It was the last room we visited, a front room, looking off to the sea. There were combs and brushes on the toilet-table; there were pens, an inkstand, and a portfolio on the writing-desk; there were books in the book-case. Framed photographs stood on the mantelpiece. In the closet dresses were suspended, and shoes and slippers were primly ranged on the floor. The bed was covered with a counterpane of blue silk; a crucifix hung on the wall about it; beside it there was a *Priedieu*, with a little porcelain holy-water vase.

"Oh," I exclaimed, turning to Monsieur and Madame Leroux, "this room is occupied?"

Madame Leroux did not appear to hear me. Her eyes were fixed in a dull stare before her, her lips were parted slightly. She looked tired, as if she would be glad when our tour through the house was finished. Monsieur Leroux threw his hand up towards the ceiling in an odd gesture, and said, "No, the room is not occupied at present."

We went back downstairs, and concluded an agreement. I was to take the house for the summer. Madame Leroux

would cook for me. Monsieur Leroux would drive into Dieppe on Wednesday to fetch me and my luggage out.

On Wednesday we had been driving for something like half an hour without speaking, when all at once Leroux said to me, "That room, Monsieur, the room you thought was occupied——"

"Yes?" I questioned, as he paused.

"I have a proposition to make," said he. He spoke, as it seemed to me, half shyly, half doggedly, gazing the while at the ears of his horse.

"What is it?" I asked.

"If you will leave that room as it is, with the things in it, we will make a reduction in the rent. If you will let us keep it as it is?" he repeated, with a curious pleading intensity. "You are alone. The house will be big enough for you without that room, will it not, Monsieur?"

Of course, I consented at once. If they wished to keep the room as it was, they were to do so, by all means.

"Thank you, thank you very much. My wife will be grateful to you," he said.

For a little while longer we drove on without speaking. Presently, "you are our first tenant. We have never let the house before," he volunteered.

"Ah? Have you had it long?" I asked.

"I built it, I built it, five, six, years ago," said he. Then after a pause, he added, "I built it for my daughter."

His voice sank, as he said this. But one felt that it was only the beginning of something he wished to say.

I invited him to continue by an interested "oh?" "You see what we are, my wife and I," he broke out, suddenly. "We are rough people, we are peasants. But my daughter, sir"—he put his hand on my knee, and looked earnestly into my face—"my daughter was as fine as satin, as fine as lace."

He turned back to his horse, and again drove for a minute or two in silence. At last, always with his eyes on the horse's ears, "There was not a lady in this country finer than my daughter," he went on, speaking rapidly, in a thick voice, almost as if to himself. "She was beautiful, she had the sweetest character, she had the best education. She was educated at the convent, in Rouen, at the Sacre Coeur. Six

years—from twelve to eighteen—she studied at the convent. She knew English, sir—your language. She took prizes for history. And the piano! Nobody living can touch the piano as my daughter could. Well,” he demanded abruptly with a kind of fierceness, “was a rough farmhouse good enough for her?” He answered his own question. “No, Monsieur. You would not soil fine lace by putting it in a dirty box. My daughter was finer than lace. Her hands were softer than Lyons velvet. And oh,” he cried, “the sweet smell they had, her hands! It was good to smell her hands. I used to kiss them and smell them, as you would smell a rose.” His voice died away at the reminiscence, and there was another interval of silence. By-and-by he began again, “I had plenty of money. I was the richest farmer of this neighbourhood. I sent to Rouen for the best architect they have there. Monsieur Clermont, the best architect of Rouen, laureate of the Fine Arts School of Paris, he built that house for my daughter; he built it and furnished it, to make it fit for a countess, so that when she came home for good from the convent she should have a home worthy of her. Look at this, Monsieur. Would the grandest palace in the world be too good for her?”

He had drawn a worn red leather case from his pocket, and taken out a small photograph, which he handed to me. It was the portrait of a girl, a delicate-looking girl, of about seventeen. Her face was pretty, with the irregular prettiness not uncommon in France, and very sweet and gentle. The old man almost held his breath while I was examining the photograph. “*Est-elle gentille? Est-elle belle, Monsieur?*” he besought me, with a very hunger for sympathy, as I returned it. One answered, of course, what one could, as best one could. He, with shaking fingers, replaced the photograph in its case. “Here, Monsieur,” he said, extracting from an opposite compartment a little white card. It was the usual French memorial of mourning; an engraving of the Cross and Dove, under which was printed: ‘Eulalie-Josephine-Marie Leroux. Born the 16th May, 1874. Died the 12th August, 1892. Pray for her.’

“The good God knows what He does. I built that house for my daughter, and when it was built the good God took her away. We were mad with grief, my wife and I;

but that could not save her. Perhaps we are still mad with grief," the poor old man said simply. "We can think of nothing else. We never wish to speak of anything else. We could not live in the house—her house, without her. We never thought to let it. I built that house for my daughter, I furnished it for her, and when it was ready for her—she died. Was it not hard, Monsieur? How could I let the house to strangers? But lately I have had losses. I am compelled to let it, to pay my debts. I would not let it to everybody. You are an Englishman. Well, if I did not like you, I would not let it to you for a million English pounds. But I am glad I have let it to you. You will respect her memory. And you will allow us to keep that room—her room. We shall be able to keep it as it was, with her things in it. Yes, that room which you thought was occupied—that was my daughter's room."

Madame Leroux was waiting for us in the garden of the chalet. She looked anxiously up at her husband as we arrived. He nodded his head, and called out, "It's all right. Monsieur agrees."

The old woman took my hands, wringing them hysterically almost. "Ah, Monsieur, you are very good," she said. She raised her eyes to mine. But I could not look into her eyes. There was a sorrow in them, an awfulness, a sacredness of sorrow, which, I felt, it would be like sacrilege for me to look at.

We became good friends, the Leroux and I, during the three months I passed as their tenant. Madame, indeed, did for me and looked after me with a zeal that was almost maternal. Both of them, as the old man had said, loved above all things to talk of their daughter, and I hope I was never loath to listen. Their passion, their grief, their constant thought of her, appealed to me as very beautiful, as well as very touching. And something like a pale spirit of the girl seemed gently, sweetly, always to be present in the house, the house that Love had built for her, not guessing that Death would come, as soon as it was finished, and call her away. "Oh, but it is a joy, Monsieur, that you have left us her room," the old couple were never tired of repeating. One day Madame took me up into the room, and showed me Eulalie's pretty dresses, her trinkets, her books, the hand-

somely bound books that she had won as prizes at the convent. And on another day she showed me some of Eulalie's letters, asking me if she hadn't a beautiful handwriting, if the letters were not beautifully expressed. She showed me photographs of the girl at all ages ; a lock of her hair ; her baby clothes ; the priest's certificate of her first communion ; the bishop's certificate of her confirmation. And she showed me letters from the good sisters of the Sacred Heart, at Rouen, telling of Eulalie's progress in her studies, praising her conduct and her character. "Oh to think that she is gone, that she is gone!" the old woman wailed, in a kind of helpless incomprehension, incredulity, of loss. Then, in a moment, she murmured, with what submissiveness she could, '*Le bon Dieu sait ce qu'il fait,*' crossing herself.

On the 12th of August, the anniversary of her death, I went with them to the parish church, where a mass was said for the repose of Eulalie's soul. And the kind old curé afterwards came round, and pressed their hands, and spoke words of comfort to them.

In September I left them, returning to Dieppe. One afternoon I chanced to meet that same old curé in the high street there. We stopped and spoke together—naturally, of the Leroux, of what excellent people they were, of how they grieved for their daughter. "Their love was more than love. They adored the child, they idolized her. I have never witnessed such affection," the curé told me. "When she died, I seriously feared they would lose their reason. They were dazed, they were beside themselves ; for a long while they were quite as if mad. But God is merciful. They have learnt to live with their affliction."

"It is very beautiful," said I, "the way they have sanctified her memory, the way they worship it. You know, of course, they keep her room with her things in it, exactly as she left it. That seems to me very beautiful."

"Her room?" questioned the curé, looking vague. "What room?"

"Oh, didn't you know?" I wondered. "Her bedroom in the chalet. They keep it as she left, with all her things about, her books, her dresses."

"I don't think I follow you," the curé said. "She never had a bedroom in the chalet."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. One of the front rooms on the first floor was her room," I informed him.

But he shook his head. "There is some mistake. She never lived in the chalet. She died in the old house. The chalet was only just finished when she died. The workmen were hardly out of it."

"No," I said, "it is you who must be mistaken; you must forget. I am quite sure. The Leroux have spoken of it to me times without number."

"But, my dear sir," the curé insisted. "I am not merely sure; I know. I attended the girl in her last agony. She died in the farmhouse. They had not moved into the chalet. The chalet was being furnished. The last pieces of furniture were taken in the very day before her death. The chalet was never lived in. You are the only person who has ever lived in the chalet. I assure you of the fact."

"Well," I said, "that is very strange, that is very strange indeed." And for a minute I was bewildered, I did not know what to think. But only for a minute. Suddenly I cried out, "Oh, I see—I see. I understand."

I saw, I understood. Suddenly I saw the pious, the beautiful deception that these poor stricken souls had sought to practise on themselves; the beautiful, the fond illusion they had created for themselves. They had built the house for their daughter, and she had died just when it was ready for her. But they could not bear—they could not bear—to think that not for one little week even, not even for one poor little day or hour, had she lived in the house, enjoyed the house. That was the uttermost farthing of their sorrow, which they could not pay. They could not acknowledge it to their own stricken hearts. So, piously, reverently—with closed eyes, as it were, that they might not know what they were doing—they had carried the dead girl's things to the room they had meant for her, they had arranged them there, they had said, "This was her room; this was her room." They would not admit to themselves, they would not let themselves stop to think, that she had never, even for one poor night, slept in it, enjoyed it. They told a beautiful pious falsehood to themselves. It was a beautiful pious game of

"make-believe," which, like children, they could play together. And—the curé had said it: God is merciful. At the end they had been enabled to confuse their beautiful falsehood with reality, and to find comfort in it; they had been enabled to forget that their "make-believe" was a "make-believe," and to mistake it for a beautiful comforting truth. The uttermost farthing of their sorrow, which they could not pay, was not exacted. They were suffered to keep it; and it became their treasure, precious to them as fine gold.

Falsehood—truth? Nay, I think there are illusions that are not falsehoods—that are Truth's own smiles of pity for us.

The Sword Dance 9.

By PIERRE LOTI

UNDER the glare of a midday sun the game was drawing to an end. The six champions were sweating from the heat in the centre of a huge grey court, cemented and levelled so that the balls should bound true; in the restrained movement of their arms, in the still vigorous play of their muscles, and in their agile leaps one divined a fatigue, and some haste to get the game over.

Moreover, I had lost all interest in the match, the sides were quite unequal, and there could be no doubt as to the ultimate result. I ceased to watch the players, and my eyes fell on an inscription in white chalk, written on the dazzling wall that was rounded at its base where the balls struck with a hard sound. I read it mechanically: *Vive Herria* (Long live the Basque country!). Doubtless the words of some passing enthusiast, or of a child. It took hold of me, assuming a sudden importance in my mind: these trifling words so strangely sonorous, this cry of revolt against the general process of levelling summed up for me in one word remained of what was Basque in this Saint-Jean festival, which day by day was fading from her.

When one has lived some time in this dying Basque Herria one sees so many games of pelote, and plays so many oneself, that they lose their power of producing an impression of local colour on the imagination. Moreover, to-day—a great gala day, in a town that is fast becoming a kind of watering place—the tiers that surround the court were filled by a cosmopolitan crowd of most distressingly commonplace appearance.

Then there arrived a troupe of odd-looking peasants, all dressed alike. The Basques who were present received them with murmurs of welcome: "You! you! you!" The visitors smiled and answered according to the custom: "You! you! you!" in high bird-like voices, such as certain tribes of Red Indians assume when they dance.

They wore black trousers, black caps, black blouses kilted in a thousand pleats and worn short, ending indeed above the loins; their faces were clean shaven, and had that simple expression peculiar to old world people. They were "Souletins," delegated dancers, who had come to take part in the festivities from the ancient district of Soule, whose traditions are still immutable. Their music accompanied them: a tambourine, and a kind of great flute shaped like a quiver, a veritable pipe of Pan.

In their presence the game was finished. And as soon as the drawling voice of the crier had proclaimed the last point in Basque, before the crowd had time to rise, the organizers of the festivities invited the Souletins to dance. Then the old man, who had been playing the pastoral flute, advanced into the middle of the court, whilst the dancers, who numbered about thirty, formed a large circle around him holding hands. At the sound of a tiny trill, strangely mysterious, and as if coming from far off, that proceeded from the huge archaic flute, the men began to move slowly in measured time. Here and there stupid laughter was heard to escape from under elegant hats; but the greater number of the people, even of the more common tourists, were impressed and interested. A hush fell upon the crowd present at this almost silent dance, in which the light slippers of the Souletins glided noiselessly over the surface of the court.

The spirit of past ages had surely come to life once again at the sound of the flute, communicating to the sensitive, unexpected thrills, and to coarser natures a feeling of respect in spite of themselves.

With the regularity of automatons, the Souletins executed to a mournful measure the quickest and most complicated steps. Occasionally a nervous leap would raise them from the ground altogether, their pleated blouses, so quaintly short, spreading wide under their arms like the skirts of a ballet girl—so light were they, one could not hear them fall to the ground again, and notwithstanding the great speed with which their feet moved, their faces remained impassive and solemn. Still the old flutist stood in the centre of the circle, playing his shrill music as though he led them by some sorcery. The midday sun stunted the shadows of

these dancers in black garments, almost to nothing, as they whirled in a circle on the grey asphalt.

The Angelus began to ring—for thank God the Angelus still rings out from the venerable belfries in this country—as the crowd dispersed after the performance, pouring into the streets of Saint-Jean-de-Luz.

A dance was announced to take place at four o'clock (the ancient sword dance to be performed by young mountaineers of Guipuzcoa); meanwhile the time had to be passed by lunching at some hotel, among tourists of all classes, and then by wandering about the gay streets of the town, where here and there the Basque music of tambourines and fifes could be heard.

In Saint-Jean-de-Luz there are still some delightful corners, some quite secluded streets where the original character of the place is yet preserved: jutting out roofs; whitewashed facades intersected by green or red beams; great trees overhanging garden walls; glimpses of the blue sea, or of the purple Pyrenees; peace and silence between white walls on a pavement of pebbles gathered from the seashore. Nevertheless, dreadful modern buildings are rising up daily—not a corner of the shore, not a lovely hill-side that is not dishonoured now by some great costly erection conceived by bloated barbarians, by snobs gone mad. It would be so simple not to disfigure the country, to build Basque houses, as a few artists have had the good taste to do! Alas, alas, who will save us from this modern trumpery, from over luxury, from uniformity—and idiots!

I sat down to wait under some trees of a square in front of a café that had been established in a house of the seventeenth century, the ex-abode of royalty, and watched bicyclist after bicyclist pass by; women with befeathered hats, women of all nationalities, of all ranks, but who copied one another in their dress, devoid of style or meaning, with a complete disdain of any difference of type. It is one of the achievements of this century that, at any watering place, it is quite impossible to tell at first sight whether you are at Ostend, at Trouville, or at Saint Sebastian.

I entirely lost that note of strangeness the dancers had given me in the morning. An effort was even necessary to remind myself that, in those distant mountains, there still

exists the remnants of a people who guards, with the secret of its origin, the faith and traditions and language of its ancestors. However, two guitarists approached me, a little old man and a young girl, who had come from Spain to beg for pence during the festivities. And the moment they heard their music, a soft music almost drowned by the noise of the wind from the sea, and the confused murmur from the town, a veil began to fall—to fall on all the modern trivialities. They struck up an old “Malguenia.” One of the guitarists played the air; it was like a song of Arabia, a melody spreading over desert plains. The other accompanied with little short and trembling notes that imitated the croak of grasshoppers in deserts of scorching sand. It seemed to speak of sorrows borne by souls in other ages, in Andalus at the heavy hour of noon, when the Moors were in possession. . . . In the indefinable nature of this music, in the mystery of its rhythm, the peculiar genius of the race will be preserved for centuries still to come, in spite of the universal fusion of men and things.

At last, on the stroke of four, the young mountain man of Guipuzcoa, who had come to dance, appeared in the court of the convent where the crowd had been assembled for some time on several hundred chairs.

One held an immense silk standard, the others carried long swords. Unconcerned, and solemn in appearance as the brothers of Soule this morning, they mounted the platform that had been prepared for them.

They wore red caps, were all in their shirt sleeves, bare-tieless, in the Basque fashion; their trousers were worn under an open waistcoat, with the traditional leather ornaments on their calves: straps of leather studded with silver bells that would jingle in a moment with a barbaric sound when they danced.

The decorated platform certainly looked rather like a theatre at a fair, in spite of a simplicity almost naïf in its directness. To appreciate them fully it was necessary to set aside any such comparison, and to forget equally the modern crowd and a thousand ridiculous little details—in fact, the general surroundings.

Moreover, they themselves appeared quite unconscious of their audience. It seems that on the previous day they

replied to the director of a neighbouring Casino, who wished to engage them for the evening, "No, we are Basques who dance in the open air before Basques, the dances of our country, that the traditions of them may be prolonged. We are not folk who take money to show ourselves off."

They were tall, supple, strong men, quite as much as their ease before this crowd of bathers as in their own village, when it is a question of dancing among themselves, on Sundays, in the open places before the churches. At first they knelt down together with heads bent low towards the earth in a magnificent salute to their standard; the bearer himself, kneeling in the centre of the motionless group, began slowly to brandish the pole, with supple movements in such a way as to cause the folds of silk to fly like great agitated wings above their heads. Then they all rose, grandly tall, and the dance commenced to the sound of a warlike march played on fife and tambourine. The step was singularly complicated, varied from time to time by tremendous bounds that shook the little bells about them, and rattled the leather straps against their calves. There was a brandishing of rapiers in time to music, quick thrusts and parrying—a simultaneous meeting of all the swords with the clash of steel. It recalled some scene in antiquity—one of those warlike dances in which the young men of Greece delighted.

* * * *

Many other dances followed on this same platform, all very ancient, some dating back incalculable ages, so remote is the origin of these people. They performed the ancient pastoral of Abraham, played by "young boys from the community of Barcus—in which angels and demons figure by the side of the patriarch, nay even Chodorlahomor, King of Sodom."

Later, when it had grown dark, they began again in the public Square, this time without a platform, in the very midst of the crowd. The sword dance appeared peculiarly noble and barbaric in the glimmer of lanterns under a moonlit sky. And then at the end a general fandango took place—everyone, girls and boys in a mad whirl of intoxicating pleasure.

* * * *

For a whole week the traditional Basque festivities succeeded one another at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, all the old dances, the diverse games of pelota; improvisations by inspired shepherds, competitions in those strange cries of hilarity called *Irrintzina* which make one shudder; songs and sacred hymns in churches. And the performers of these bear names whose consonants echo down to us from primitive times, names such as Agestaran, Lizarraga, Imbil, Olaiz, and Heguiaphal. . . .

It all takes place amidst surroundings that become more and more incongruous, before assemblies in which Beotiens predominate, and is so out of vogue, so little characteristic of the country now, alas! that at moments it seems almost lamentable in the midst of the foolishly smiling crowd.

Yet how touching, how worthy of sympathy and respect are these efforts at preservation, these religious revivals of past customs which those festivities represent!

In Defence Of His Right 10.

By DANIEL DEFOE

A GENTLEMAN of a very good estate married a lady of also a good fortune, and had one son by her, and one daughter, and no more, and after a few years his lady died. He soon married a second time; and his second wife, though of an inferior quality and fortune to the former, took upon her to discourage and discountenance his children by his first lady, and made the family very uncomfortable, both to the children and to their father also.

The first thing of consequence which this conduct of the stepmother produced in the family, was that the son, who began to be a man, asked the father's leave to go abroad to travel. The stepmother though willing enough to be rid of the young man, yet because it would require something considerable to support his expenses abroad, violently opposed it, and brought his father also to refuse him after he had freely given him his consent.

This so affected the young gentleman, that after using all the dutiful applications to his father that he could possibly do, as well by himself as by some other relations, but to no purpose; and being a little encouraged by an uncle, who was brother to his mother, his father's first lady, he resolved to go abroad without leave, and accordingly did so.

What part of the world he travelled into I do not remember; it seems his father had constantly intelligence from him for some time, and was prevailed with to make him a reasonable allowance for his subsistence, which the young gentleman always drew bills for, and they were honourably paid; but after some time, the stepmother prevailing at home, one of his bills of exchange was refused, and being protested, was sent back without acceptance; upon which he drew no more, nor did he write any more letters, or his father hear anything from him for upwards of four years, or thereabout.

Upon this long silence, the stepmother made her advantage several ways; she first intimated to his father that he must needs be dead; and consequently, his estate

should be settled upon her eldest son (for she had several children). His father withstood the motion very firmly; but the wife harassed him with her importunities; and she argued upon two points against him, I mean the son.

First, if he was dead, then there was no room to object, her son being heir at law.

Secondly, if he was not dead, his behaviour to his father in not writing for so long a time was inexcusable, and he ought to resent it, and settle the estate as if he were dead; that nothing could be more disobliging, and his father ought to depend upon it that he was dead, and treat him as if he was so; for he that would use a father so, should be taken for one dead, as to his filial relation, and be treated accordingly.

His father, however, stood out a long time, and told her that he could not answer it to his conscience; that there might happen many things in the world, which might render his son unable to write; that he might be taken by the Turks, and carried into slavery; or he might be among the Persians or Arabians (which it seems was the case), and so could not get any letters conveyed; and that he could not be satisfied to disinherit him, till he knew whether he had reason for it or no, or whether his son had offended him or no.

These answers, however just, were far from stopping her importunities, which she carried on so far, that she gave him no rest, and it made an unquiet family; she carried it very ill to him, and in a word, made her children do so too; and the gentleman was so wearied out with it, that once or twice he came to a kind of consent to do it, but his heart failed him, and then he fell back again, and refused.

However, her having brought him so near it, was an encouragement to her to go on with her restless solicitations, till at last he came thus far to a provisional agreement, that if he did not hear from his son by such a time, or before it, he would consent to a re-settling of the estate.

She was not well satisfied with the conditional agreement, but of it as it was; though, as she often told him, she was far from being satisfied with it as to the time, for he had fixed it for four years, as above.

He grew angry at her telling him so, and answered,

that she ought to be very well satisfied with it, for that it was time little enough, as his son's circumstances might be.

Well, she teased him however so continually, that at last she brought him down to one year: but before she brought him to that, she told him one day in a heat, that she hoped his ghost would one time or other appear to him, and tell him that he was dead, and that he ought to do justice to his other children, for he should never come to claim the estate.

When he came, so much against his will, to consent to shorten the time to one year, he told her that he hoped his son's ghost, though he was not dead, would come to her, and tell her he was alive, before the time expired. "For why," says he, "may not injured souls walk while embodied, as well as afterwards?"

It happened one evening after this, that they had a most violent family quarrel upon this subject, when on a sudden a hand appeared at a casement, endeavouring to open it; but as all the iron casements used in former times opened outward, but hasped and fastened themselves in the inside, so the hand seemed to try to open the casement, but could not. The gentleman did not see it, but his wife did, and she presently started up, as if she was frightened, and, forgetting the quarrel they had upon their hands: "Lord bless me!" says she, "there are thieves in the garden." Her husband ran immediately to the door of the room they sat in, and opening it, looked out.

"There's nobody in the garden," says he; so he clapped the door to again, and came back.

"I am sure," says she, "I saw a man there."

"It must be the devil then," says he; "for I'm sure there's nobody in the garden."

"I'll swear," says she, "I saw a man put his hand up to open the casement; but finding it fast, and I suppose," adds she, "seeing us in the room, he walked off."

"It is impossible he could be gone," says he; "did not I run to the door immediately? and you know the garden walls on both sides hinder him going."

"Prithee," says she angrily, "I ain't drunk nor in a dream, I know a man when I see him, and 'tis not dark, the sun is not quite down."

"You're only frightened with shadows," says he (very full of ill-nature): "folks generally are so, that are haunted with evil conscience: it may be 'twas the devil."

"No, no, I'm not soon frightened," says she; "if 'twas the devil, 'twas the ghost of your son: it may be come to tell you he was gone to the devil, and you might give your estate to your eldest bastard, since you won't settle it on the lawful heir."

"If it was my son," says he, "he's come to tell us he's alive, I warrant you, and to ask how you can be so much a devil to desire me to disinherit him"; and with these words: "Alexander," says he aloud, repeating it twice, starting up out of his chair, "if you are alive, show yourself, and don't let me be insulted thus every day with your being dead."

At those very words, the casement which the hand had been seen at by the mother, opened of itself, and his son Alexander looked in with a full face, and staring directly upon the mother with an angry countenance, cried "Here," and then vanished in a moment.

The woman that was so stout before, shrieked out in a most dismal manner, so as alarmed the whole house; her maid ran into the parlour, to see what was the matter, but her mistress was fainted away in her chair.

She was not fallen upon the ground, because it being a great easy chair, she sunk a little back against the side of the chair, and help coming immediately in, they kept her up; but it was not till a great while after, that she recovered enough to be sensible of anything.

Her husband ran immediately to the parlour door, and opening it, went into the garden, but there was nothing, and after that he ran to another door that opened from the house into the garden, and then to two other doors which opened out of his garden, one into the stableyard, and another into the field beyond the garden, but found them all fast shut and barred; but on one side was his gardener and a boy, drawing the rolling-stone: he asked them if anybody else had been in the garden, but they both constantly affirmed nobody had been there; and they were both rolling a gravel-walk near the house.

Upon this he comes back into the room, sits him down

again, and said not one word for a good while ; the women and servants being busy all the while, and in a hurry, endeavouring to recover his wife.

After some time she recovered so far as to speak, and the first words she said, were :

“ L——d bless me ! what was it ? ”

“ Nay,” says her husband, “ it was Alexander, to be sure.”

With that she fell into a fit, and screamed and shrieked out again most terribly.

Her husband not thinking that would have affected her, did what he could to persuade her out of it again ; but that would not do, and they were obliged to carry her to bed, and get some help to her ; but she continued very ill for several days after.

However, this put an end for some considerable time to her solicitations about his disinheriting her stepson.

But time, that hardens the mind in cases of a worse nature, wore this off also by degrees, and she began to revive the old cause again, though not at first so eagerly as before.

Nay, he used her a little hardly upon it too, and if ever they had any words about it he would bid her hold her tongue, or that if she talked any more upon the subject, he would call Alexander again to open the casement.

This aggravated things much ; and though it terrified her a great while, yet at length she was so exasperated, that she told him she believed he dealt with the devil, and that he had sold himself to the devil only to be able to fright his wife.

He jested with her, and told her any man would be beholden to the devil to hush a noisy woman, and that he was very glad he had found the way to do it, whatever it cost him.

She was so exasperated at this, that she threatened him if he played any more of his hellish arts with her she would have him indicted for a wizard, and having a familiar spirit ; and she could prove it, she said, plain enough, for that he had raised the devil on purpose to frighten his wife.

The fray parted that night with ill words and ill nature enough, but he little thought she intended as she said the next day he had forgot it all, and was as

as if nothing had happened.

But he found his wife chagrined and disturbed very much, full of resentment, and threatening him with what she resolved to do.

However, he little thought she intended him the mischief she had in her head, offering to talk friendly to her; but she rejected it with scorn, and told him she would be as good as her word, for she would not live with a man that should bring the devil into the room as often as he thought fit, to murder his wife.

He strove to pacify her by fair words, but she told him she was in earnest with him; and, in a word, she was in earnest; for she goes away to a justice, and making an affidavit that her husband had a familiar spirit, and that she went in danger of her life, she obtained a warrant for him to be apprehended.

In short, she brought home the warrant, showed it him, and told him she had not given it into the hands of an officer, because he should have the liberty to go voluntarily before the justice of the peace, and if he thought fit to let her know when he would be ready, she would be so too, and would get some of her own friends to go along with her.

He was surprised at this, for he little thought she had been in earnest with him, and endeavoured to pacify her by all the ways possible; but she found she had frightened him heartily, and so indeed she had, for though the thing had nothing in it of guilt, yet he found it might expose him very much, and being loath to have such a thing brought upon the stage against him, he used all the entreaties with her that he was able, and begged her not to do it.

But the more he humbled himself the more she triumphed over him; and carrying things to an unsufferable height of insolence, she told him at last, she would make him do justice, as she called it; that she was sure she could have him punished if he continued obstinate, and she would not be exposed to witchcraft and sorcery; for she did not know to what length he might carry it.

To bring the story to a conclusion; she got the better of him to such a degree that he offered to refer the thing to indifferent persons, friends on both sides; and they met several times, but could bring it to no conclusion. His

friends said there was nothing in it, and they would not have him comply with anything upon the pretence of it; that he called for his son, and somebody opened the casement and cried, "here"; that there was not the least evidence of witchcraft in that, and insisted that she could make nothing of it.

Her friends carried it high, instructed by her: she offered to swear that he had threatened her before with his son's ghost; that now he visibly raised a spectre; for that calling upon his son, who was dead to be sure, the ghost immediately appeared; that he could not have called up the devil thus to personate his son, if he had not dealt with the devil himself, and had a familiar spirit, and that this was of dangerous consequence to her.

Upon the whole, the man wanted courage to stand it, and was afraid of being exposed; so that he was grievously perplexed, and knew not what to do.

When she found him humbled as much as she could desire, she told him, if he would do her justice, as she called it (that is to say, settle his estate upon her son), she would put it up, on condition that he should promise to frighten her no more with raising the devil.

That part of the proposal exasperated him again, and he upbraided her with the slander of it, and told her he defied her, and she might do her worst.

Thus it broke off all treaty, and she began to threaten him again: however, at length she brought him to comply, and he gives a writing under his hand to her, some of her friends being by, promising that he would comply if his son did not arrive, or send an account of himself, within four months.

She was satisfied with this, and they were all made friends again, and accordingly he gave the writings; but when he delivered it to her in presence of her two arbitrators, he took the liberty to say to her, with a grave and solemn kind of speech:

"Look you," says he, "you have worried me into this agreement by your fiery temper, and I have signed it against justice, conscience, and reason; but depend upon it, I shall never perform it."

One of the arbitrators said, "Why, sir, this is doing

nothing ; for if you resolve not to perform it, what sign the writing ? Why do you promise what you do not intend shall be done ? This will but kindle a new flame to burn with, when the time fixed expires."

"Why," says he, "I am satisfied in my mind that my son is alive."

"Come, come," says his wife, speaking to the gentleman that had argued with her husband, "let him sign the agreement, and let me alone to make him perform the conditions."

"Well," says her husband, "you shall have the writing and you shall be let alone ; but I am satisfied you will not ask me to perform it ; and yet I am no wizard," added "as you have wickedly suggested."

She replied, that she would prove that he dealt with the devil, for that he raised an evil spirit by only calling him by his name ; and so began to tell the story of the case and the casement.

"Come," says the man to the gentleman that was his friend, "give me the pen ; I never dealt with but one devil in my life, and there it sits," turning to his wife ; "but now I have made an agreement with her that none but the devil would desire any man to sign, and I will sign it ; say, give me the pen, but neither she nor all the devils in hell will ever be able to get it executed ; remember I say."

She began to open at him, and so a new flame was kindled, but the gentlemen moderated between them, and her husband setting his hand to the writing put an end to the fray at that time.

At the end of four months she challenged the performance, and a day was appointed, and her two friends who had been the arbitrators were invited to dinner upon that occasion, believing that her husband would have executed the deeds ; and accordingly the writings were brought forth, engrossed, and read over ; and some old writings which at her marriage were signed by her trustees, in order to her quitting some part of the estate to her son, were brought to be cancelled : the husband being brought on by fair means or foul, I know not whether, to be in a hurry for peace sake, to execute the deeds, and disinherit his son, alleging that, indeed, if he was dead it was no wrong to

and if he was alive, he was very unkind and undutiful to his father, in not letting him hear from him in all that time.

Besides, it was urged that if he should at any time afterwards appear to be alive, his father (who had very much increased, it seems, in his wealth) was able to give him another fortune, and to make him a just satisfaction for the loss he should sustain by the paternal estate.

Upon these considerations, I say, they had brought over the poor low-spirited husband to be almost willing to comply; or, at least, willing or unwilling, it was to be done, and, as above, they met accordingly.

When they had discoursed upon all the particulars, and, as above, the new deeds were read over, she or her husband took the old writings up to cancel them; I think the story says it was the wife, not her husband, that was just going to tear off the seal, when on a sudden they heard a rushing noise in the parlour where they sat, as if somebody had come in at the door of the room which opened from the hall, and went through the room towards the garden door, which was shut.

They were all surprised at it, for it was very distinct, but they saw nothing. The woman turned pale, and was in a terrible fright; however, as nothing was seen, she recovered a little, but began to ruffle her husband again.

"What," says she, "have you laid your plot to bring up more devils again?"

The man sat composed, though he was under no little surprise too.

One of her gentlemen said to him, "What is the meaning of all this?"

"I protest, sir," says he, "I know no more of it than you do."

"What can it be then?" said the other gentleman.

"I cannot conceive," says he, "for I am utterly unacquainted with such things."

"Have you heard nothing from your son?" says the gentleman.

"Not one word," says the father; "no, not the least word these five years."

"Have you written nothing to him," says the gentleman, "about this transaction?"

"Not a word," says he; "for I know not where to direct a letter to him."

"Sir," says the gentleman, "I have heard much of apparitions, but I never saw any in my life, nor did I ever believe there was anything of reality in them; and, indeed, I saw nothing now; but the passing of some body, or spirit, or something, across the room just now, is plain; I heard it distinctly. I believe there is some unseen thing in the room, as much as if I saw it."

"Nay," says the other arbitrator, "I felt the wind of it as it passed by me. Pray," adds he, turning to the husband, "do you see nothing yourself?"

"No, upon my word," says he, "not the least appearance in the world."

"I have been told," says the first arbitrator, "and have read, that an apparition may be seen by some people and be invisible to others, though all in the same room together."

However, the husband solemnly protested to them all that he saw nothing.

"Pray, sir," says the first arbitrator, "have you seen anything at any other time, or heard any voices or noises, or had any dreams about this matter?"

"Indeed," says he, "I have several times dreamed my son is alive, and that I had spoken with him; and once that I asked him why he was so undutiful, and slighted me so, as not to let me hear of him in so many years, seeing he knew it was in my power to disinherit him."

"Well, sir, and what answer did he give?"

"I never dreamed so far on as to have him answer; it always waked me."

"And what do you think of it yourself," says the arbitrator; "do you think he's dead?"

"No, indeed," says the father, "I do believe in my conscience he's alive, as much as I believe I am alive myself; and I am going to do as wicked a thing of its kind as ever any man did."

"Truly," says the second arbitrator, "it begins to shock me, I don't know what to say to it; I don't care to

meddle any more with it. I don't like driving men to act against their consciences."

With this the wife, who, as I said, having a little recovered her spirits, and especially encouraged because she saw nothing, started up: "What's all this discourse to the purpose," says she; "is it not all agreed already? what do we come here for?"

"Nay," says the first arbitrator, "I think we meet now not to inquire into why it is done, but to execute things according to agreement, and what are we frightened at?"

"I'm not frightened," says the wife, "not I; come," says she to her husband, haughtily, "sign the deed; I'll cancel the old writings if forty devils were in the room"; and with that she takes up one of the deeds, and went to tear off the seal.

That moment the same casement flew open again, though it was fast in the inside, just as it was before; and the shadow of a body was seen, as standing in the garden without, and the head reaching up to the casement, the face looking into the room, and staring directly at the woman with a stern and an angry countenance: "Hold," said the spectre, as if speaking to the woman, and immediately clapped the casement to again, and vanished.

It is impossible to describe here the consternation this second apparition put the whole company into; the wife, who was so bold just before, that she would do it though forty devils were in the room, screamed out like a woman in fits, and let the writing fall out of her hands; the two arbitrators were exceedingly terrified, but not so much as the rest; but one of them took up the award which they had signed, in which they awarded the husband to execute the deed to dispose of the estate from the son.

"I dare say," said he, "be the spirit a good spirit or a bad, it will not be against cancelling this"; so he tore his name out of the award, and so did the other, by his example, and both of them got up from their seats, and said they would have no more to do in it.

But that which was most unexpected of all was that the man himself was so frightened, that he fainted away; notwithstanding it was, as it might be said, in his favour.

This put an end to the whole affair at that time ; and, as I understand by the sequel, it did so for ever.

The story has many particulars more in it, too long to trouble you with : but two particulars, which are to the purpose, I must not omit, viz. :

1. That in about four or five months more after this second apparition, the man's son arrived from the East Indies, whither he had gone four years before in a Portuguese ship from Lisbon.

2. That upon being particularly inquired of about these things, and especially whether he had any knowledge of them, or any apparition to him, or voices, or other intimation as to what was doing in England, relating to him ; he affirmed constantly that he had not, except that once he dreamed his father had written him an angry letter, threatening him that if he did not come home he would disinherit him, and leave him not one shilling. But he added that he never did receive any such letter from his father in his life, or from anyone else.

The Green-Corn Dance 11.
(San Ildefonso)

By ALICE CORBIN

FAR in the east
The gods beat
On the thunder drums

With rhythmic thud
The dancers' feet
Answer the beat
Of the thunder drums.

Eagle feather
On raven hair,
With bright tablita's
Turquoise glare.

Tasselled corn
Stands tall and fair
From rain-washed roots
Through lambent air.

Corn springs up
From the seed in the ground,
The cradled corn
By the sun is found.

Eagle feather
And turkey plume
From the wind-swept cloud
Bring rain and gloom.

Hid in the cloud
The wind brings rain
And the water-song
To the dust-parched plain.



The Parrot 12.

By W. DURANTY

THE box-car rattled and swayed as the train jerked slowly out of the station, but the big sergeant standing at the open door balanced himself easily in his thick felt boots.

He held Sergey McTavish by the collar of his astrakhan tunic and the seat of his breeches, kicking and wriggling like a retriever pup. Then he swung the boy up level with his shoulder and threw him sprawling on a snowdrift.

"There," he said, "you young devil, that will teach you to steal potatoes from the army and sell them to dirty food speculators. You have the red head of an imp from hell, and the black heart of a capitalist. We have done with you."

So ended the six-months' career of Sergey McTavish as mascot of the seventh battalion of Red Army Riflemen.

During those months he had tasted victory—in the swift advance to the gates of Warsaw—and defeat—in the hungry flight back across the frontier; he had come to swear like a Russian soldier, who swears with strength and zest; and he had looted gloriously—the astrakhan cloak on which the battalion tailor had worked all night, jolting cross-legged in a mule-cart, to make round cap, tunic and breeches. But he had not learned discipline or honesty; neither over-current in the Red Army of those days; and so here he was gasping for breath on a snowdrift in the outskirts of a little town in the Ural foothills, while his late comrades jogged heedlessly on to their garrison at Ekaterinburg.

When he got his breath back, Sergey scrambled to his feet and turned to curse the big sergeant as worst he knew how. But the tail of the train was blank and black in the December twilight, growing smaller every second, too small to be worth cursing. In the jargon of Red Army, the episode was "liquidated."

Sergey Sergeyitch McTavish, twelve-year-old orphan, son of a Scottish soldier of fortune and a G *farmer's*

daughter from the old Volga "colonies," was alone, friendless, penniless and hungry in a wind-swept freight-yard, with nothing in sight but the meager huts of the station and rows of roofless cars whose broken sides stuck out like jagged teeth. Sergey regretted now that he had been so smart and witty a few hours before at the expense of the station commandant, a thickheaded Lett. His comrades on the train had roared with laughter and kept off the angry Lett when Sergey dived among them for refuge. The light in the station hut meant warmth and food now, but Letts are a stubborn and unforgiving people. No, there was nothing for it but to tramp the three miles back to that dismal town.

Damn potatoes anyway, and speculators! If they had only left him the money! That brute of a sergeant had grabbed every kopeck. Still, he was lucky, at that; they might have beaten him or marooned him naked on the open steppe.

But a veteran of the Polish war knows worse things than hunger or cold or darkness. The boy dragged his cap down over his ears and set off across the rusty tracks toward the town.

As he crept under the second of three lines of dismantled freight-cars, his nose caught full blast the smell of cooking food. Right before him in the third row, one car was intact, light shining behind the little window in the door, and smoke pouring from the stove-pipe at the roof-corner.

Without hesitation Sergey banged his fist upon the door. It slid open immediately, and a girl looked down at him.

"Come in, stranger," she cried. "We are expecting you. But tell me quickly is it to heaven or to hell that we owe the pleasure of your visit?" "He who sent me here said I had the red head of an imp from hell," replied Sergey, swinging up by her outstretched hand and slamming the door behind him. "So you can understand I find it cold here, and am hungry, after my journey."

The girl brushed off his cap and pulled him forward under the kerosene lamp which hung from the middle of the roof.

"Red as hell's flames," she muttered admiringly. "That should keep you warm, and we will fill your belly. My father, here, just said it would take a saint or a devil to conquer my problem, and I told him as you knocked, that even Saint Nicholas the Wonder-worker would never dare risk his wings in Russia today."

A roar of laughter from a heap of straw in the corner near the stove. "'Tis but a little imp for so great a task, Marfoosha, and I doubt if the Prince of Devils himself is a match for the Baba Papagai, who beyond doubt is his own grandmother." The voice shook a trifle over the last words, and Sergey glimpsed fingers gesturing quickly over a broad khaki chest.

There were three people in the car, the girl, comely and slim with a tangle of blonde hair, red shirt tucked into short blue kilt and high black leather boots; the man, in khaki uniform, lying on the straw, fat brown cheeks, quick little black eyes in a bush of iron-grey hair and whiskers; and a small bent figure by the stove, so wrapped in a service overcoat of the old Imperial army that nothing was visible but a white wisp of beard, a bald shining pate and two pink pointed ears.

"Comrade imp," said the girl, "I present my grandfather, who lives alone in this car, being wise and having money, but not wise enough to help me in my trouble; and my father, who is commandant of the prison, but unable to save my lover, his prisoner, from . . ."

"Don't forget to present Comrade Soup also," broke in the old man with a chuckle, "and little Comrade Vodka in his bottle, who is best of all." And, plunging an iron ladle into the steaming pot, he filled an earthen bowl and passed it to the hungry boy.

Twice Sergey emptied the bowl, breaking chunks of black bread into the hot liquid. Then he gulped a stinging mouthful of spirit from the bottle, and taking a palmful of green flake *mahorka*, and a scrap of newspaper from the old man, twisted the cone-shaped cigarette of the Russian soldier, lighted the upturned flap with a sulphur match and putting the small end of the cone between his lips, puffed out a cloud of evil-smelling smoke.

"What is this trouble you speak of," he asked, "and who is the Parrot Woman, the Baba Papagai?"

All three of his hosts spoke at once, in noisy excitement. There was a young man, a foreigner, a prisoner, an American soldier, who had come somehow from somewhere eastward on a train, young and cheerful and clever with his hands beyond belief; and the girl Marfoosha loved him, and he had mended the electric light for the prison and later for the whole town, and at first he was quite dumb like a beast, but now he spoke humanly enough after several months; and two weeks ago the Soviet had agreed to let Marfoosha marry him, because they wanted to keep him in the town to start again the nail factory as he had promised, and because he was cheerful and had blue eyes and brown curly hair, and Marfoosha loved him and wanted to marry him terribly, and would die too if he were killed.

This Sergey learned first, because the girl talked fastest and loudest, but through it all beat like the drum in a regimental band the name of the Parrot Woman, Baba Papagai, who was a witch and a demon and the grandmother of all the devils. Bit by bit the boy got clear about her also and linked her up with Marfoosha and the American prisoner.

She had a familiar spirit, this terrible woman, a parrot, red and grey, in a wire cage; and when it bit you, you were guilty; and when it didn't, you were innocent; but it always bit you, and so you were always shot.

Nobody knew where she came from, but it was said she was the widow of a famous revolutionary who had worked in a factory at Ekaterinburg, and had been shot by the Czar's army in 1906. And now she was president of a "Flying Tribunal," that moved about the whole province judging counter-revolutionaries; and always she made them put a finger in the parrot's cage, and always it bit them, and then they were shot. And it was reported that she lived on the smell of blood and must kill a man every day or she would die and the Devil, her grandson, would fly off with her. And when the Soviet knew she was coming to hold court in the town, they were all very frightened, because there was only one victim, the ex-manager of the factory, who twice had tried to escape from the town and had been

prevented. One man would never be enough for the Baba Papagai. She would suspect the Soviet of being lukewarm in the cause of revolution, and perhaps put some of them to the trial of that horrid parrot, as had happened before elsewhere, always with fatal results.

So four days ago the Soviet had held a meeting hastily and in secret, and had decided to sacrifice their American. They were sorry, but it was his head or theirs; no argument was possible. They'd have put high hopes on his reopening the factory; but after all, he was a stranger and a prisoner, and it was said the Americans were fighting to help the counter-revolution, and it was he or they, and finally there was just a chance that the parrot wouldn't like the taste of foreigners and fail to bite him.

Marfoosha and her father, who, as prison commandant, felt most uneasy about the whole affair, had come to ask the advice of the hermit in the box car. But he had been of no help to them, and the father had said it would take an angel or a devil to find the way out of the mess, and just at that second Sergey had knocked, and said at once he was an imp from hell, so what would he suggest?

Sergey's Scotch blood whispered caution. He puffed his *mahorka* cigarette and declared profoundly that there was a solution for every problem, but this case being extremely difficult, he had better set eyes first on the woman and her parrot, to say nothing of the American and the ex-manager of the factory, before deciding what should be done. There was a twinkle in Marfoosha's eye as she received his verdict, and the boy was reassured as to the reality of her belief in his diabolic origin; but the prison commandant and his elderly parent were ready in approval.

"Never drive pigs too swiftly," said the ancient, banging the cork of his vodka bottle hard against the side of the car, and burying it in the recesses of his great coat. "Let our Comrade Imp view the situation for himself, and maybe he will be able to make a plan. For me, I am at a loss—I admit it freely; the young man must die; there is no doubt of it."

"Everyone must die some day," replied his son, "and I, as commandant of a prison, know that some die quicker

than others. But this American is a friendly youth, and clever with his hands, and Marfoosha loves him dearly; so I want his life saved and no trouble with this infernal old woman. If the flame-headed Imp can help us, I, Alexei Petrovich, promise that he shall have all the food he needs in this cold country, and a warm corner by my fire to toast his toes till they are red as his hair."

All of which sounded good to Sergey McTavish as he said good-bye to the old man, and accompanied Marfoosha and her father across the cold white plain to the little town.

Far off, beneath the low roofs of the town, windows poured a flood of light upon the snow.

"What makes your town so bright?" asked Sergey, tramping a little ahead of Marfoosha, step for step with the long strides of her father.

"I told you the American fixed our electric machines for us," said the prison warden. "I guess you are surprised to see one of our towns using electricity these days."

He emphasized the word "our" with a faintly sneering accent. It is a habit the Russians have, to deprecate everything Russian.

"And now," he went on mournfully, "even this town won't have any electricity any more. When he's gone, the whole works will be *kaput* in no time. Oh, that Baba Papagai and her parrot! To think that a miserable bird could bring such trouble upon us!"

"You say it's a bird?" asked Sergey, who had never seen a parrot in his life and had not the least idea whether it was bird or beast or perhaps a new kind of Soviet commissar. "Well, if it's only a bird that's worrying you why don't you kill it?"

"Kill it!" almost shouted Marfoosha. "Why, you might as well talk of killing Lenin!"

"Shh!" cried her father sharply. "You mustn't talk like that!" He caught Sergey by the shoulder. "See here, little comrade, you don't understand. It's not a bird, really; it only looks like a bird. But it talks like a man, and it tells her, the Baba, what she must do. Who shall say which is the master, the parrot or the parrot woman? Everyone knows there are things like that, which come out of the dark to

THE PAR

serve those who sell their souls
kill them, ever, the dark spirits, but
could drive them away with the
water. And now the priests are spat
and God has turned His face from
become a plaything for the evil ones.
a whimper and he crossed himself
girl stood motionless, but her breath
as if she had been running.

Sergey McTavish shivered. This
from the dark, and the man's fear was
bit tight on the life rule which had steered
and his father's father who died to chase
last sortie from Plevna—"No Scot can
Russian."

"That is stuff for women and children
"but we men of the Red Army care not
devils; and besides, why worry about it
come to the river?"

His companions made no answer, and
on in silence through the snow.

The prison was a large house set back
trees whose branches hung glittering with frost.
of an electric arc-lamp. A sentry bundled in
bearskin coat peered at them through the rim
then stood aside with a thump of his bayonet
the doorstep.

In the high, square entrance hall two men
before a huge fireplace, ablaze with round birch
as a man's body. The younger leaped up as the
tall and loose-limbed, in a uniform of dark must
such as Sergey had never seen. In two strides, so
he was across the room, lifting Marfoosha right
feet into his arms.

There was more delight than anger in her s
protest. Sergey stood watching, round-eyed, while t
father walked forward to join the other men beside
"Enough, Mahlinkic, enough," cried Marfoosh
stified voice. "Put me down—we have a visitor,
mannered one!"

4, and
ly; so
al old
Alexei
needs
to toast

as he
oosha
little

adows

ergey,
h the

hines
prised

ering
very-

rown
, the
agai
ting

never
ether
oviet
you

you

t talk
here,
ally;
tells
s the
nows
ck to

Regaining her feet, she flung her arm round Sergey's shoulder. "This is my American, little comrade; his name is Djim, but that is a dog's name, not a man's, so I call him Mahlinkie, the little one, because he is so tall." She laughed gayly and pushed the boy forward, pulling off his hat with her other hand. "Look, Mahlinkie, it's fire, but it doesn't burn." And she ran her fingers through Sergey's flaming hair.

"Fortheluvamike!"

Sergey McTavish did not understand this American greeting, but something within him called forth two half-forgotten words in reply. "Scottish, gorrd-am-you-sirr."

The effect was startling. High in the air went Sergey in those strong young arms, while a torrent of unfamiliar words beat upon his ears. What a din they made! Sergey, six feet from the ground, beside himself with excitement, yelling his newfound slogan; the American shouting strange noises, and Marfoosha dancing around them, half in laughter, half in tears.

The prison warden and his friend by the fire rushed forward in panic. "Are you mad?" cried the former, catching his daughter around the waist. "Stop this uproar. You don't know what's happened. She is here already, staying in Petrusha's house."

Marfoosha halted as if struck by lightning, and the American stiffened, holding Sergey in mid-air.

Slowly he lowered the boy to the ground, still grasping him firmly under the arms. An instant's silence; then the warden continued: "She came to-night, with her parrot—saints defend us—and holds court to-morrow. Very angry when she heard there were only two cases. She will judge the factory manager in the morning; and the next day"—he jerked his thumb towards the American—"it's his turn. They say we are lucky. He's a foreigner—she was quite interested and said no more about our scarcity of prisoners."

There was no answer to these words save a low sound from Marfoosha. She had fainted.

Sergey McTavish awoke next morning from a tormenting dream of gray devil-birds with red tails pecking at his breast, to find Marfoosha and her American standing beside the bench on which he had passed the night before the fire.

The girl's face was red and swollen with weeping, but her lover wore a friendly grin.

"Wake up, little comrade, wake up, and eat your breakfast, for there's work for you to do." She had tried to speak cheerfully, but as Sergey rubbed his eyes she sank down in a heap beside the bench, sobbing desperately.

The tall American tried vainly to comfort her: "Marfoosha, my darling, my baby girl, don't worry."

Sergey McTavish sat upright. How stupid girls were, not to understand that death was part of a soldier's job! He pulled Marfoosha's hair sharply. "Stop crying," he said, "and tell me what's the matter."

Marfoosha shook herself free. "All right," she said to her lover, "but you go and let me talk to him alone."

And then to Sergey: "The Baba Papagai is in a frightful humour. We know it from Petrusha. She had her parrot at breakfast with her, early, two hours ago before it was light, and sat there talking, talking. She said to him, 'Belogvardeyetz' (White Guard), and the parrot answered 'Belogvardeyetz', and then the Baba Papagai laughed and the parrot said over and over again, 'Belogvardeyetz,' and the Baba Papagai laughed some more.

"You, Sergey Sergeyitch, do you know what that means?" Marfoosha leaned across the bench and laid her clenched fists close to Sergey's heart.

"No," said Sergey uneasily, with a spoonful of *kasha* poised half-way to his lips.

"Death! That's all! Just death for my American!" Marfoosha laid her head on her arms, then straightened up and rattled on breathlessly:

"The court opens at ten o'clock. You go there. It will be just a general rehearsal. The Baba Papagai is having her rehearsal this morning. The real show is when my American comes before her." Marfoosha's voice faltered. Sergey again stopped eating.

"She knows it. She told Petrusha she had heard of this American in town. She said she had never before had the chance to try her *papagai* on an American. She cursed America. She said it was the sink of all iniquity, a den of wolves, the castle of capitalism. She said that all Americans

were White Guards, and when she said 'American' to her parrot this morning, it just answered 'Belogvardeyetz.'

"Sergey, go see for yourself."

Sergey put the half-empty *kasha* bowl on the floor. He had lost his appetite. It was clear to him that Marfoosha was all wrought up about this business, but, hoping against despair, somehow looked to him to help her.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Near ten," answered Marfoosha. "Come with me—I'll show you the way." Outside, the sun was rising red through the mist over the blank white steppe.

Ten minutes from her home Marfoosha stopped, took Sergey by the arm and pointed straight ahead.

"There it is," she said.

"What, the church?" asked Sergey.

"It used to be the church. Don't you see the guard in front? Now go, please, and come to us as soon as it is over." Marfoosha took Sergey's head in her arms, pressed it to her heart until he struggled to get free, then released him with a push and, turning swiftly, ran back the way they had come.

Sergey McTavish recovered his balance, frowned a moment at the retreating figure, then proceeded warily toward the church. There was nothing strange to him about a Cheka trial taking place there. Even when other buildings were available, the "flying Tribunals of the All Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution" had found that their sessions made a far greater impression on their White Guard enemies if they were held in the church. It appealed, too, to the Red sense of humour.

In front of the building, beneath an ikon of the Virgin Mary, a Red Guard paced up and down, his conical cap pulled tight over his ears to meet the threadbare collar of an old grey overcoat. The buttons, cut off because they had borne the insignia of the Czar, were replaced with string. When Sergey approached, the Red Guard dropped the butt of his rifle nonchalantly in the snow, crying, "What do you want, little princeling?" with an ironic wink at the boy's astrakhan suit.

"Don't call me names, comrade," grinned back Sergey.

THE PARROT.

"I'm Red Army too. This is loot from the Polaks, issued me by the regimental tailor, Seventh Battalion Rifles. Just lost touch with headquarters. Now be a good comrade and give me a cigarette and let me go inside and get warm a bit."

The sentry laughed, said he'd no tobacco but obligingly turned his back while Sergey slipped past into the church.

For a moment he could see nothing in the dim interior save two tall candles on the altar above which an ikon glittered with gold and jewels.

Very quietly he groped his way forward to the last of a number of rough wooden benches which had been placed in the nave, and sat down behind rows of people bent forward in eager attention. At the other end of the church a man was speaking in a high-pitched voice, trailing off at times into falsetto. The words came rapidly, tumbling over one another, hardly intelligible. Sergey could only catch a phrase now and then—"never... Czar's government... always tried to work for the people... worker myself... not my fault... education... no counter-revolutionary, believe me, believe me, believe me."

Cutting this babble like a saw, another voice, metallic, harsh, rasped a single word: "*Beloguardeyetz!*" (White Guard).

Then a loud laugh. Then silence.

Sergey's eyes, by now accustomed to the semi-darkness, sought the source of the inhuman voice. With a shiver of interest he realized the word "*Beloguardeyetz!*" had come from a cage swinging beneath a stiff gold embroidery attached like a banner to a pole, which stood at the left of the altar. Within the cage a grey-red bird moved listlessly on its perch. That was the bird that talked like a man, but who had laughed?

Near the altar a woman was rising to her feet behind a table draped with red cloth. Erect, she loomed enormous, six feet or more in height. Traces of mocking laughter were still about her lips, but her eyes bore no sign of it. The flickering light gleamed on abnormally protruding eyeballs, threw into relief a network of swollen veins on either temple, and showed her thickened throat bursting from the collar of a soldier's tunic.

Sergey felt his hands shake as they fumbled for his pockets. He needed no one to tell him this was the Baba Papagai.

With a gesture of impatience she pulled off the cap, revealing a thin growth of grey hair. The woman was nearly bald.

She turned to the left where a man was standing, thin and crumpled, between two soldiers with fixed bayonets.

"Counter-revolutionary!" she bellowed suddenly. The man staggered. He moistened his lips with the end of his tongue and seemed to be trying to speak, but before the words came, the Baba Papagai continued more quietly:

"I know what you want to say, citizen. You never carried on counter-revolutionary activities nor resisted the proletariat; in fact, you admire the revolution intensely and think Lenin and Trotsky the greatest men in history. Yes, I know all that; I've heard the same story before, often." Her voice deepened and again became harsh. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and resumed: "Fortunately, we have here with us the means of seeing beneath those fine words, right to the inner secrets of your heart. You are surprised, perhaps, that an ignorant old woman like me should see, should be able to know the secret heart of an 'intelligenter' like you; but I don't pretend so much. It is this wise bird here, who is older than I, older, it may be, than anyone in this town, who by long experience can recognize a counter-revolutionary at first glance, can smell the black soul of him in one sniff."

Her voice had become monotonous, rising and falling like that of a priest reciting some familiar ritual.

"Walk forward, my friend of the people, walk forward, and put your finger into the cage of my little comrade, that he may take a sniff at it. Perhaps you are innocent, as you would have us believe. The little comrade will know because he never makes a mistake. If you are innocent, he will do you no harm, will not touch your finger; but if your hand has offended against the People,"—again that inhuman roar,—"he will bite it to the bone, and after my judgment, you shall receive your punishment."

She made a sign to the soldiers, who took the cringing man by the arms and dragged him toward the parrot's cage. The man shrank within his coat as if wishing to wither up and slip out of his clothes, leaving them in the hands of his guards. They grasped him more firmly and urged him forward. The candle-light glanced from their bayonets and played across the bulging eyes of the Baba Papagai as she mockingly reassured the terror-stricken figure in their hands.

"Have no fear, little servant of dogs. That bird is a proletarian. You said you loved the workers. If it's true, the papagai will never touch you. Nor will I."

There was no sound save the prisoner's feet dragging across the floor as the soldiers carried him to the last instance of justice. He had slumped down in their arms so that when they reached the foot of the golden banner, his head fell in the shadow cast by the bottom of the cage. In the attempt to rise him upright, the guards brought his forehead heavily against it. The impact shook the parrot. It ruffled its feathers, stretched its wings, brought them tightly back against its body and hopped expectantly forward on its perch. Its indifference was gone; its beady eyes were watchful.

A murmur of awe, or wonderment, or horror, floated from the shadowy figures which filled the benches. It was cut short by the voice of the Baba Papagai.

"Carry out the procedure, Soldiers of the Revolution. If the servant of dogs cannot lift his hand, lift it for him."

The prisoner struggled. One of the soldiers deftly twisted the left arm of the writhing man behind his back and pushed it upward until he gasped: "I'll do it." The soldier released the pressure on the twisted arm and the prisoner stood upright. He lifted his right hand with extended forefinger and thrust it forward by short jerks. Twice he dropped his hand, and twice the soldier pressed the hammer-lock until he gasped again: "I'll do it."

The third time, his finger reached the cage. It trembled so that he was unable to poke it through the bars. The other guard grasped it firmly and pushed it into the cage. For a moment there was utter stillness in the church. The prisoner had raised his head and was staring with fascinated eyes at

the parrot. He watched the bird as though the finger in the cage was another man's.

The parrot eyed the prisoner's hand. Cocking its head on one side, it cast its beady gaze appraisingly at the forefinger that shook as though playfully just below its beak. Its claws against the perch made a faint scratching sound which seemed to reverberate in the silence. A peasant seated on the front bench crossed himself mechanically.

The parrot bent its neck, and—rubbed its beak on the perch. Sergey almost laughed. Then he caught the first expulsion of breath, half choked and gasped, as he saw the parrot lunge forward swiftly, take the finger with a snapping motion in its beak and bite downward.

More shocking than any scream was the silence of the prisoner. The parrot had bitten him to the bone. He behaved as though he had not felt it. Such a relief, this stab of pain, from the slow torture of suspense, so welcome the knowledge of his doom after its uncertainty, that the bird's bite, though meaning death, was like a douche of cold water, reviving his manhood.

"*Belogardeyetz!*" croaked the parrot, back on its perch with one strong wingbeat.

"He never makes a mistake," exclaimed the Baba Papagai, and gabbled formally: "Citizen Nikitin, this court finds you guilty of counter-revolution.

"Take him out!" she shouted. "To the cellar with the White Guard servant of dogs!"

The prisoner was the calmest man in the church. Erect, his head back, with a firm step he allowed his guards to lead him across the front of the altar toward the rear entrance. As he passed the table of the Baba Papagai, she leaned forward and feasted her bulging eyes on his drawn white face. The prisoner looked her back squarely, sneering as though in sympathy with the snarl on her face, and with a contemptuous cry, "Parrot justice!" yielded to the urging of his guards as they dragged him through the door.

The Baba Papagai put on the cloth cap. Her upper lip clamped down in savage determination. "To-night, at eleven o'clock, we'll hear the next case on the docket."

She gathered up her papers, shoved the table aside, and strode down the aisle.

Court was adjourned.

Sergey had intended to slip out before the others, but he had not reckoned with this abrupt ending of the session. Before he could move, the Baba Papagai was in the aisle scrutinizing the faces as she passed. With every step she took, his courage waned. By the time she reached his bench, he was huddled cowering in his seat. He felt numb in the clutch of a nightmare. Those eyes were the eyes of a kelpie, that monster from the stories of Scotland his father had told him long ago, half-bull, half-demon, but shaped like a man, which dwelt at the bottom of the deep lochs of the Highlands and on nights when the full moon shone, appeared beside the skiffs of unwary boatmen and dragged them down to death. The kelpie, he recollected shudderingly, had just such bulging eyes, such shaggy eyebrows, such lineaments of hate.

Never before had Sergey known such anguish as when the Baba Papagai stopped beside him, turned and surveyed the church to satisfy herself no one had moved since she left her table, then, quite accidentally let fall her gaze on his small red head.

The Baba Papagai apparently felt the need to emphasize her exit.

"Well, who are you, with your head of an imp from hell?" boomed the cruel voice.

This repetition of the phrase so fresh in his memory broke the spell sufficiently for him to stammer out: "I'm only a little boy."

"Whelp!" spat the Baba Papagai, and passed on through the door.

Sergey waited motionless until nearly everyone had left the building.

Running back to the prison as fast as he could, Sergey felt the movement of his legs in the sharp air send the blood tingling through his veins, and by the time he reached the house and paused to scrape the snow from his boots, he had shaken off his fears. He felt big with importance as he entered the hall and knew that he had news to tell. Marfoosha's face brought back the unaccustomed sense of

depression. She was sitting at the table between her father and the American soldier, her head sunk on her breast.

The two men looked up eagerly when Sergey appeared, but Marfoosha never stirred.

"Well, what happened?" cried the commandant.

"It bit, all right," announced Sergey in a matter of fact tone.

The prison warden shoved his glass away from him, banged his fist on the table: "I knew it."

Marfoosha lifted her head as if just awakened. Catching Sergey by the arm she drew him to her and whispered: "Tell us about it. All about it."

Sergey began. They listened as though their lives depended upon every word.

"And the—," he went on, "she said she would hold court again to-night."

"To-night?" all three broke out. "To-night? It was to be to-morrow."

"You mean," gasped Marfoosha, "that—that—he is to be tried to-night?"

"That's what she said," responded Sergey.

Marfoosha threw herself on the floor, clasping her lover round the knees. "They shan't. They shan't!" she screamed.

His face was white and his lip trembled a little as he patted her head, repeating tenderly: "*Nichevo, nichevo, nichevo.*" It was the only Russian word he could pronounce without a trace of accent, the universal "Never mind" or "What's the use," of Slavic fatalism.

But his caressing hand froze when the commandant mumbled thickly: "They shoot you through the back of the head."

Marfoosha sobbed aloud.

"Yes, that's how they do it," insisted her father, tipsy with indignation. "They take you down to the cellar of the church and just as you pass the threshold they shoot you in the back of the head. They think you won't expect it, and won't turn around, and that it's the easiest way to get it over. But lots do know. The dirty swine!"

A moan from his daughter checked him suddenly, diverting his anger: "And you! You damned imp!" he

yelled at Sergey, "What are you going to do? I thought you could find something?"

Marfoosha's weary, "Let him alone," roused her father to a higher pitch.

"No, I won't let him alone. What good has he done? You damned imp! It was desuhka who swore you amounted to something. The old man is getting crazier every day. Suppose you get along over there and let him know how worthless you are. Get on. Get out of here." Unable to vent his feelings otherwise, the commandant staggered to his feet and advanced with threatening fist toward the boy.

Sergey retreated sullenly. He was half-way down the steps when the commandant rushed out and yelled at him: "What time will it be?"

"Eleven o'clock to-night," shouted the boy without pausing.

It was already past five o'clock and pitch dark. He found his way through the town by the glow from the windows and afterward by instinct, like a young wild animal, accurately retraced the path of the evening before. His thoughts were whirling about the awful eyes of the Baba Papagai. The longer he thought, the more convinced he became that she was a kelpie. His father's stories came back more vividly. Surely there was some detail he had forgotten. Yes, something about a charm or talisman against the monster. His father certainly had spoken of a charm. But that was all so long ago. To Sergey a whole lifetime seemed to have passed since then, and he groped back in his memory as an old man strives to recall his youth. He tried to concentrate his mind on the talisman, but each time it slipped away from him. "Like a water-melon seed slipping through your fingers," thought Sergey.

The smile struck a vein of association. The talisman was some kind of seed. His boots brushed against the branches of a fir tree growing beside the railroad track. Sergey felt as though a door in his mind had opened half-way.

"Tree berries! The berries of the mountain ash! That's what father said was good for kelpies. Woven in a cross."

But something else too, when there were no ash berries.

Something still better, he reflected. The feeling that the door was only half-way open persisted. He was walking head down, so absorbed in the effort to remember, that he went past the old man's box-car without noticing it. Suddenly he stopped, sniffed the air like a hound on a trail, turned, saw the box-car and ran toward it. He continued to sniff as he banged on the door, stamping impatiently until it opened with a puff of savory steam.

"I've found it!" shouted Sergey, leaping up and seizing the astonished old man by the hand. "I've found it," he repeated, dancing in excitement. "We can save him now."

"In the name of the Holy Saints Boris and Gleb," ejaculated the grandfather. "What is it you've found? Make you jump like a flea on a frog's back?"

Sergey hardly heard him. His eyes were roving round the cabin.

"Ha! There, in the corner!" He heaved a deep sigh of relief. "The charm!" he exclaimed. "The charm of the little grandfather, the charm to defeat the kelpie."

"And now perhaps you'll tell me what a kelpie is, and why you're behaving like an idiot," grunted the old man sarcastically as he dipped a bowl of stew and placed it smoking hot before the boy. How good it smelled! Sergey recollected his stomach so keenly that he forgot his excitement. Over the stew he related the day's events, dwelling on his conviction that the Baba Papagai was a kelpie.

"Very probable. Very probable." The old man nodded affirmatively and looked with as much wonder as old age can feel at the red head of his small visitor bobbing up and down over the bowl.

"Whew, I'm late, terribly late. Maybe he's already gone. Must run like the devil."

Sergey jumped for the door, pulling his fur cap over his ears, and with a shrill "Good-bye!" bolted into the night.

He took the steps at the prison door in one jump, landed on his heels, skidded and fell in a heap at the feet of the surprised sentry.

"Gangway!" he gasped. "Lemme in."

"Who, the——is holding you?" said the sentry. Sergey jerked open the door and rushed into the hall.

It was empty.

Sergey stopped, frozen with the fear that he had come too late to give his talisman to the American. His feet lagged as he crossed the hall, but voices in a room beyond quickened his step. He pushed his head cautiously through the door; entered quickly, closed it with a bang and jumped forward. Marfoosha and the American were sitting on the floor, talking so earnestly that they scarcely heeded Sergey's presence. On the bed lay the prison commandant, groaning and panting. He was drunk.

Sergey brought his two hands down thwack on the backs of Marfoosha and her lover.

"Come! Quick! I've found it—the charm—to save you. Where's the kitchen? Come with me." His words brought the two instantly to their feet, and the commandant rolled his eyes, trying to get up.

"Quick! Here!" Sergey grabbed the American with his right hand and was digging in his pocket with the other when the Red Guard brusquely shoved him aside with: "Out of the way now, and enough of this monkey business. Can't help it. Orders is orders. Come along."

Marfoosha threw her arms around her lover's neck. The Red Guard frowned with embarrassment but paused. Sergey turned his back as though in sympathy with the feelings of the lovers, but in the moment of their embrace he pulled from his pocket a little white object, and clenching it tightly in his fist whirled and cried:

"Well, comrade, shake hands. Come on, be a man—don't stand there like a dummy."

The American looked down at him, smiled, released Marfoosha and took Sergey's small paw.

"Good-bye," he said.

"A talisman. Keep it in your hand until the last minute," whispered Sergey. "It's magic. Hold it tight, dig you nails into it, and you can't lose." Then loud: "Good-bye, comrade."

The heavy door of the house clanged shut, but Marfoosha stood where they had left her. Then she sank to her knees.

"Holy Saint Martha, thou who hast suffered greatly—"

The Baba Papagai believed in ceremony of a kind.

As eleven boomed from the tower, the Baba Papagai's huge bulk moved down the aisle towards the altar. Behind her two soldiers, each carrying a lighted candle, a yard long and thick as a man's arm. Behind them a third, holding aloft the golden banner, with the parrot's cage, wrapped in a white napkin swinging beneath it like a censor. Then the clerk of the court with measured step. Then two guards with fixed bayonets. Then the prisoner, head high, shoulders squared, marching slow as a funeral parade. Finally, two more guards, stolid, ponderous.

The Baba Papagai strode to the table before the altar, turned, surveyed the audience, seated herself and folded her arms. The man with the ecclesiastical banner placed it neatly in its socket, and with a nervous gesture flicked off the cover from the cage. The light of the two candles fell on the parrot. It blinked, ruffled its feathers, stretched its neck and croaked: "*Gotova!*" (Ready).

The Baba Papagai bared her yellow fangs.

"*Gotova!* Yes, we are ready, my little dove!

"Comrades," said the Baba Papagai, pushing back her chair, crossing her legs and shoving her cap to the back of her head. "Comrades, we are here to-night to try a foreign dog who was sent to impose the might of his capitalist masters upon the workers and peasants of the Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics. He comes from the country which above all would like to see the first Workers and Peasants Government once more enslaved by tyrants. An American! It means a dog."

The word "dog" aroused the parrot. It squawked: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

The woman's maniac laughter shocked the echoes of the church.

"Never wrong! Never wrong! My little dove never mistakes them," she cried. "Now, you dog of a White Guard, speak now for yourself. Say why you, a foreigner, dared invade our country."

The American answered boldly in his childish Russian:

"*Yab gavaryou ochen malo po Russky. No yab ne vinovat.*"

"Oh, you speak very little Russian but you're not guilty. You know enough to say that. And you've nothing more to say?" The Baba Papagai rose to her feet, placed

her cap before her on the table and leaned forward. "Nothing more? Or have you some excuse?"

"*Nichevo*," retorted the prisoner coolly. It was the one word he pronounced perfectly in Russian.

Her face darkened with fury.

"Dog!" The word hissed to the farthest corners of the building.

Immediately the parrot responded: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

"The little comrade has spoken. Let him judge the case."

The two guards beside the American grasped him by the arms. He needed no urging. "*Nichevo*," he said, again, to tell them he was not afraid to play his part without coercion.

He walked straight up to the cage. Sergey held his breath. The boy's glance shifted rapidly from the parrot's cage to the Baba Papagai, still leaning forward on the table, her kelpie's eyes a-goggle at her victim.

"Hell!" said the American aloud. The foreign word rang out defiantly. "Hell!" he repeated again, and stuck his forefinger into the cage.

The parrot lifted its wings. Every spectator—save perhaps one, for Sergey's Scotch heart beat stoutly in his breast—knew that it would strike. It lifted its wings, squawked, teetered on its perch, lowered its beak close to the proffered finger, then half flew, half hopped across the cage, beating the air, screeching atrociously: "*Konchala! Konchala!*" ("Finished! Finished!")

"Well? What do you say to that, old girl?" asked the American in English, grinning at the Baba Papagai.

Her eyes were glazed. She crashed her fist upon the table.

"Dog! Dog!" she roared.

"*Belogvardeyetz! Belogvardeyetz!*" weakly echoed the parrot.

"Once more, you dog!" commanded the Baba Papagai.

"As often as you like," answered the American, and put his finger again through the bars.

This time the parrot never pretended to investigate. It cowered at the bottom of the cage, buried its beak in its breast feathers, and only when the Baba Papagai shrieked

"Dog!" at the top of her voice did it respond with a low croak: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

"What's the hour?" the Baba Papagai turned to the clerk beside her. Trembling, he pulled from beneath his sheepskin coat a massive gold repeater, said, "Fifteen minutes to midnight," and returned the former property of the Prince Rashkushin to his pocket.

"Release the prisoner. He is acquitted." The parrot woman kicked aside her table and strode down the aisle. For the sake of this one victim she could not disavow her favourite instrument of terror.

This time Sergey Sergeyitch McTavish sat up straight in his seat and stared at her as she passed him. The moment she disappeared, he ran forward and grasped the American by the hand.

"A kelpie! I told you! A kelpie!" he yelled crazily. "My father was right—my father knew."

Indifferent to the buzz of congratulations and the eager hands outstretched to them, the young soldier swung Sergey aloft.

"You're all right, kid," he shouted in English. "You may be cuckoo, but you're there with the goods." Then in Russian: "What was it, *malchik*? I kept it in my hand until the last, but afterward I dropped it. How did you do it?"

His mouth close to the other's ear, Sergey murmured: "Take a sniff at your finger."

The American gave a loud yell, then checked himself.

"Yes," whispered Sergey, "*garlic*—that's the charm against kelpies."

The two set off at a trot for the home of Marfoosha.

The Half-Pint Flask 13.

By DUBOISE HEYWARD

I PICKED up the book and regarded it with interest. Even its format suggested the author: the practical linen covered boards, the compact and exact paragraphing. I opened the volume at random. There he was again: "There can be no doubt," "An undeniable fact," "I am prepared to assert." A statement in the preface leaped from the context and arrested my gaze:

"The primitive American Negro is of a deeply religious nature, demonstrating in his constant attendance at church, his fervent prayers, his hymns, and his frequent mention of the Deity that he has cast aside the last vestiges of his pagan background, and has unreservedly espoused the doctrine of Christianity."

I spun the pages through my fingers until a paragraph in the last chapter brought me up standing:

"I was hampered in my investigations by a sickness contracted on the island that was accompanied by a distressing insomnia, and, in its final stages, extreme delirium. But I already had sufficient evidence in hand to enable me to prove—"

Yes, there it was, fact upon fact. I was overwhelmed by the permanence, the unanswerable last word of the printed page. In the face of it my own impressions became fantastic, discredited even in my own mind. In an effort at self-justification I commenced to rehearse my *impressions* of that preposterous month as opposed to Barksdale's *facts*; my feeling for effects and highly developed fiction writer's imagination on the one hand; and on the other, his cold word as reported by his five good senses.

Sitting like a crystal gazer, with the book in my hand, I sent my memory back to a late afternoon in August, when, watching from the shore near the landing on Ediwander Island, I saw the "General Stonewall Jackson" slide past a frieze of palmetto trees, shut off her steam, and nose up to the tenuous little wharf against the ebb.

Two barefooted Negroes removed a section of the rail and prepared to run out the gang plank. Behind them gathered the passengers for Ediwander landing: ten or a dozen Negroes back from town with the proceeds of a month's labour transformed into flaming calico, amazing bonnets, and new flimsy, yellow luggage; and trailing along behind them, the single white passenger.

I would have recognized my guest under more difficult circumstances and I experienced that inner satisfaction that comes from having a new acquaintance fit neatly into a preconceived pattern. The obstinacy of which I had been warned was evident in the thin immobile line of the mouth over the prognathous jaw. The eyes behind his thick glasses were a bright hard blue and moved methodically from object to object, allowing each its allotted time for classification, then passing unhurriedly on to the next. He was so like the tabloid portrait in the letter of the club member who had sent him down that I drew paper from my pocket and refreshed my memory with a surreptitious glance.

"He's the museum, or collector type," Spencer had written; "spends his time collecting facts—some he sells—some he keeps to play with. Incidentally his hobby is American glass, and he has the finest private collection in the State."

We stood eyeing each other over the heads of the noisy landing party without enthusiasm. Then when the last Negro had come ashore he picked up his bag with a meticulousness that vaguely exasperated me, and advanced up the gang plank.

Perfunctory introductions followed: "Mr. Courtney?" from him with an unnecessarily rising inflection; and a conventional "Mr. Barksdale, I presume," from me in reply.

The buckboard had been jogging along for several minutes before he spoke.

"Very good of Mr. Spencer to give me this opportunity," he said in a close clipped speech. "I am doing a series of articles on Negroid Primates, and I fancy the chances for observation are excellent here."

"Negroid Primates!" The phrase annoyed me. Uttered in that dissecting voice, it seemed to strip the human from the hundred or more Negroes who were my only company

except during the duck season when the club members dropped down for the shooting.

"There are lots of Negroes here," I told him a little stiffly. "Their ancestors were slaves when the island was the largest rice plantation in South Carolina, and isolation from modern life has kept them primitive enough, I guess."

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I will commence my studies at once. Simple souls, I fancy. I should have my data within a month."

We had been travelling slowly through deep sand ruts that tugged at the wheels like an undertow. On either side towered serried ranks of virgin long-leaf pine. Now we topped a gentle rise. Before us was the last outpost of the forest crowning a diminishing ridge. The straight-columned trees were bars against a released splendour of sunset sky and sea.

Impulsively I called his attention to it:

"Rather splendid, don't you think?"

He raised his face, and I was immediately cognizant of the keen methodical scrutiny that passed from trees to sea, and from sea back to that last wooded ridge that fell away into the tumble of dunes.

Suddenly I felt his wire-tight grasp about my arm.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing with his free hand. Then with an air of authority, he snapped: "Stop the cart. I've got to have a look at it."

"That won't interest you. It's only a Negro burying ground. I'll take you to the quarters to-morrow, where you can study your 'live primates.'"

But he was over the wheel with surprising alacrity, and striding up the slight ascent to the scattered mounds, beneath the pines.

The sunset was going quickly, dragging up leagues of delicately tinted gauze into tight little bales of primary colour, then draping these with dark covers for the night. In sharp contrast against the light the burying ground presented its pitiful emblems of the departed. Under the pine needles, in common with all Negro graveyards of the region, the mounds were covered with a strange half-emptied medicine bottles, tin spoons, and o

weapons that had failed in the final engagement with the last dark enemy.

Barksdale was puttering excitedly about among the graves, peering at the strange assortment of crockery and glass. The sight reminded me of what Spencer had said of the man's hobby and a chill foreboding assailed me. I jumped from the buckboard.

"Here," I called, "I wouldn't disturb those things if I were you."

But my words went unheeded. When I reached Barksdale's side, he was holding a small flat bottle, half filled with a sticky black fluid, and was rubbing the earth from it with his coat sleeve. The man was electric with excitement. He held the flask close to his glasses, then spun around upon me.

"Do you know what this is?" he demanded, then rushed on triumphantly with his answer: "It's a first issue, half-pint flask of the old South Carolina State dispensary. It gives me the only complete set in existence. Not another one in America. I had hoped that I might get on the trail of one down here. But to fall upon it like this!"

The hand that held the flask was shaking so violently that the little palmetto tree and single X that marked it described small agitated circles. He drew out his handkerchief and wrapped it up tenderly, black contents and all.

"Come," he announced, "we'll go now."

"Not so fast," I cautioned him. "You can't carry that away. It simply isn't done down here. We may have our moral lapses, but there are certain things that—well, can't be thought of. The graveyard is one. We let it alone."

He placed the little linen-covered package tenderly in his inside pocket and buttoned his coat with an air of finality; then he faced me truculently.

"I have been searching for this flask for ten years," he asserted. "If you can find the proper person to whom payment should be made I will give a good price. In meantime I intend to keep it. It certainly is of no use to anyone, and I shan't hesitate for a silly superstition."

I could not thrash him for it and I saw that not short of physical violence would remove it from his possession. For a second I was tempted to argue with him; tell why he should not take the thing. Then I was frustrated.

my own lack of a reason. I groped with my instinctive knowledge that it was not to be done, trying to embody the abstract into something sufficiently concrete to impress him. And all the while I felt his gaze upon me, hard, very blue, a little mocking, absolutely determined.

Behind the low crest of the ridge sounded a single burst of laughter, and the ring of a trace chain. A strange panic seized me. Taking him by the arm I rushed him across the short distance to the buckboard and into his seat; then leaped across him and took up the lines.

Night was upon us, crowding forward from the recesses of the forest, pushing out beyond us through the last scattered trees, flowing over the sea and lifting like level smoke into the void of sky. The horse started forward, wrenching the wheels from the clutching sand.

Before us, coming suddenly up in the dusk, a party of field Negroes filled the road. A second burst of laughter sounded, warm now, volatile and disarming. It made me ashamed of my panic. The party passed the vehicle, dividing and flowing by on both sides of the road. The last vestiges of day brought out high lights on their long earth-polished hoes. Teeth were a white accent here and there. Only eyes, and fallen sockets under the brows of the very old, seemed to defy the fading glimmer, bringing the night in them from the woods. Laughter and soft Gullah words were warm in the air about us.

"Howdy, Boss."

"Evenin', Boss."

The women curtsied in their high tucked-up skirts; the men touched hat brims. Several mules followed, grotesque and incredible in the thickening dark, their trace chains dangling and chiming faintly.

The party topped the rise, then dropped behind it.

Silence, immediate and profound, as though a curtain had been rung down upon the heels of the last.

"A simple folk," clipped out my companion. "I rather envy them starting out at zero, as it were, with everything to learn from our amazing civilization."

"Zero, hell!" I flung out. "They had created a Congo art before our ancestors drugged and robbed their first Indian."

weapons that had failed in the final engagement with the last dark enemy.

Barksdale was puttering excitedly about among the graves, peering at the strange assortment of crockery and glass. The sight reminded me of what Spencer had said of the man's hobby and a chill foreboding assailed me. I jumped from the buckboard.

"Here," I called, "I wouldn't disturb those things if I were you."

But my words went unheeded. When I reached Barksdale's side, he was holding a small flat bottle, half filled with a sticky black fluid, and was rubbing the earth from it with his coat sleeve. The man was electric with excitement. He held the flask close to his glasses, then spun around upon me.

"Do you know what this is?" he demanded, then rushed on triumphantly with his answer: "It's a first issue, half-pint flask of the old South Carolina State dispensary. It gives me the only complete set in existence. Not another one in America. I had hoped that I might get on the trail of one down here. But to fall upon it like this!"

The hand that held the flask was shaking so violently that the little palmetto tree and single X that marked it described small agitated circles. He drew out his handkerchief and wrapped it up tenderly, black contents and all.

"Come," he announced, "we'll go now."

"Not so fast," I cautioned him. "You can't carry that away. It simply isn't done down here. We may have our moral lapses, but there are certain things that—well—can't be thought of. The graveyard is one. We let it alone."

He placed the little linen-covered package tenderly in his inside pocket and buttoned his coat with an air of finality; then he faced me truculently.

"I have been searching for this flask for ten years," he asserted. "If you can find the proper person to whom payment should be made I will give a good price. In the meantime I intend to keep it. It certainly is of no use to anyone, and I shan't hesitate for a silly superstition."

I could not thrash him for it and I saw that nothing short of physical violence would remove it from his person. For a second I was tempted to argue with him; tell him why he should not take the thing. Then I was frustrated by

my own lack of a reason. I groped with my instinctive knowledge that it was not to be done, trying to embody the abstract into something sufficiently concrete to impress him. And all the while I felt his gaze upon me, hard, very blue, a little mocking, absolutely determined.

Behind the low crest of the ridge sounded a single burst of laughter, and the ring of a trace chain. A strange panic seized me. Taking him by the arm I rushed him across the short distance to the buckboard and into his seat; then leaped across him and took up the lines.

Night was upon us, crowding forward from the recesses of the forest, pushing out beyond us through the last scattered trees, flowing over the sea and lifting like level smoke into the void of sky. The horse started forward, wrenching the wheels from the clutching sand.

Before us, coming suddenly up in the dusk, a party of field Negroes filled the road. A second burst of laughter sounded, warm now, volatile and disarming. It made me ashamed of my panic. The party passed the vehicle, dividing and flowing by on both sides of the road. The last vestiges of day brought out high lights on their long earth-polished hoes. Teeth were a white accent here and there. Only eyes, and fallen sockets under the brows of the very old, seemed to defy the fading glimmer, bringing the night in them from the woods. Laughter and soft Gullah words were warm in the air about us.

"Howdy, Boss."

"Evenin', Boss."

The women curtsied in their high tucked up skirts; the men touched hat brims. Several mules followed, grotesque and incredible in the thickening dark, their trace chains dangling and chiming faintly.

The party topped the rise, then dropped behind it.

Silence, immediate and profound, as though a curtain had been rung down upon the heels of the last.

"A simple folk," clipped out my companion. "I rather envy them starting out at zero, as it were, with everything to learn from our amazing civilization."

"Zero, hell!" I flung out. "They had created a Congo art before our ancestors drugged and robbed their first Indian."

weapons that had failed in the final engagement with the last dark enemy.

Barksdale was puttering excitedly about among the graves, peering at the strange assortment of crockery and glass. The sight reminded me of what Spencer had said of the man's hobby and a chill foreboding assailed me. I jumped from the buckboard.

"Here," I called, "I wouldn't disturb those things if I were you."

But my words went unheeded. When I reached Barksdale's side, he was holding a small flat bottle, half filled with a sticky black fluid, and was rubbing the earth from it with his coat sleeve. The man was electric with excitement. He held the flask close to his glasses, then spun around upon me.

"Do you know what this is?" he demanded, then rushed on triumphantly with his answer: "It's a first issue, half-pint flask of the old South Carolina State dispensary. It gives me the only complete set in existence. Not another one in America. I had hoped that I might get on the trail of one down here. But to fall upon it like this!"

The hand that held the flask was shaking so violently that the little palmetto tree and single X that marked it described small agitated circles. He drew out his handkerchief and wrapped it up tenderly, black contents and all.

"Come," he announced, "we'll go now."

"Not so fast," I cautioned him. "You can't carry that away. It simply isn't done down here. We may have our moral lapses, but there are certain things that—well—can't be thought of. The graveyard is one. We let it alone."

He placed the little linen-covered package tenderly in his inside pocket and buttoned his coat with an air of finality; then he faced me truculently.

"I have been searching for this flask for ten years," he asserted. "If you can find the proper person to whom payment should be made I will give a good price. In the meantime I intend to keep it. It certainly is of no use to anyone, and I shan't hesitate for a silly superstition."

I could not thrash him for it and I saw that nothing short of physical violence would remove it from his person. For a second I was tempted to argue with him; tell him why he should not take the thing. Then I was frustrated by

THE HALF-PINT FLASK

my own lack of a reason. I groped with n knowledge that it was not to be done, tryin the abstract into something sufficiently concre him. And all the while I felt his gaze upon n blue, a little mocking, absolutely determined.

Behind the low crest of the ridge sour burst of laughter, and the ring of a trace cha panic seized me. Taking him by the arm I across the short distance to the buckboard seat; then leaped across him and took up the li

Night was upon us, crowding forward from the forest, pushing out beyond us through the trees, flowing over the sea and lifting like leve the void of sky. The horse started forward, v wheels from the clutching sand.

Before us, coming suddenly up in the du field Negroes filled the road. A second burr sounded, warm now, volatile and disarming. ashamed of my panic. The party passed the vel and flowing by on both sides of the road. Th of day brought out high lights on their long hoes. Teeth were a white accent here and the and fallen sockets under the brows of the ver to defy the fading glimmer, bringing the night the woods. Laughter and soft Gullah words the air about us.

"Howdy, Boss."

"Evenin', Boss."

The women curtsied in their high tucke the men touched hat brims. Several mules follow and incredible in the thickening dark, their dangling and chiming faintly.

The party topped the rise, then dropped l Silence, immediate and profound, as tho had been rung down upon the heels of the last.

"A simple folk," clipped out my co rather envy them starting out at zero, as it wer thing to learn from our amazing civilization."

"Zero, hell!" I flung out. "They had cre art before our ancestors drugged and robb Indian."

Barksdale consigned me to limbo with his mocking, intolérable smile.

The first few days at the club were spent by my guest in going through the preliminary routine of the systematic writer. Books were unpacked and arranged in the order of study, loose-leaf folders were laid out, and notes made for the background of his thesis. He was working at a table in his bedroom which adjoined my own, and as I also used my sleeping apartment as a study for the fabrication of the fiction which, with my salary as manager of the club, discharged my financial obligations, I could not help seeing something of him.

On the morning of the second day I glanced in as I passed his door, and surprised him gloating over his find. It was placed on the table before him, and he was gazing fixedly at it. Unfortunately, he looked up; our glances met and, with a self-consciousness that smote us simultaneously, remained locked. Each felt that the subject had better remain closed—yet there the flask stood evident and unavoidable.

After a strained space of time I managed to step into the room, pick up a book and say casually:

"I am rather interested in Negroes myself. Do you mind if I see what you have here?"

While I examined the volume he passed behind me and put the flask away, then came and looked at the book with me. "'African Religions and Superstitions,'" he said, reading the title aloud; then supplemented:

"An interesting mythology for the American Negro, little more. The African Gullah Negro, from whom these are descended, believed in a God, you know, but he only created, then turned his people adrift to be prayed upon by malign spirits conjured up by their enemies. Really a religion or rather a superstition, of senseless terror."

"I am not so sure of the complete obsolescence of the old rites and superstitions," I told him, feeling as I proceeded that I was engaged in a useless mission. "I know these Negroes pretty well. For them, Plat-eye, for instance, is a very actual presence. If you will notice the cook you will see that she seems to get along without a prayer book, but when she goes home after dark she sticks a sulphur match in her hair. Sulphur is a charm against Plat-eye."

"Tell me," he asked with a bantering light in his hard eyes, "just what is Plat-eye?"

I felt that I was being laughed at and floundered ahead at the subject, anxious to be out of it as soon as possible.

"Plat-eye is a spirit which takes some form which will be particularly apt to lure its victims away. It is said to lead them into danger or lose them in the woods and, stealing their wits away, leave them to die alone."

He emitted a short acid laugh.

"What amusing rot. And I almost fancy you, believe it."

"Of course I don't," I retorted, but I experienced the feeling that my voice was overemphatic and failed to convince.

"Well, well," he said. "I am not doing folk-lore but religion. So that is out of my province. But it is amusing and I'll make a note of it. Plat-eye, did you say?"

The next day was Thursday. I remember that distinctly because, although nearly a week's wages were due, the last servant failed to arrive for work in the morning. The club employed three of them; two women and a man. Even in the off season this was a justifiable expense, for a servant could be hired on Ediwander for four dollars a week. When I went to order breakfast the kitchen was closed, and the stove cold.

After a makeshift meal I went out to find the yard boy. There were only a few Negroes in the village and these were women hoeing in the small garden patches before the cabins. There were the usual swarms of lean mongrel hounds, and a big sow lay nourishing her young in the warm dust of the road. The women looked up as I passed. Their soft voices, as they raised their heads one after another to say "Mornin', Boss," seemed like emanations from the very soil, so much a part of the earth did they appear.

But the curs were truculent that morning: strange, canny, candid little mongrels. If you want to know how you stand with a Negro, don't ask him—pat his dog.

I found Thomas, the hired boy, sitting before his cabin watching a buzzard carve half circles in the blue.

"When are you coming to work?" I demanded. "The day's half done."

"I gots de toot'ache, Boss. I can't git ober 'fore termorrer." The boy knew that I did not believe him. He also knew that I would not take issue with him on the point. No Negro on the island will say "no" to a white man. Call it "good form" if you will, but what Thomas had said to me was merely the code for "I'm through." I did not expect him and I was not disappointed.

Noon of the following day I took the buckboard, crossed the ferry to the mainland, and returned at dark with a cheerful wholesome Negress, loaned to me by a plantation owner, who answered for her faithfulness and promised that she would cook for us during the emergency. She got us a capital supper, retired to the room adjoining the kitchen that I had prepared for her, as I did not wish her to meet the Negroes in the village, and in the morning had vanished utterly. She must have left immediately after supper, for the bed was undisturbed.

I walked straight from her empty room to Barksdale's sanctum, entered, crossed to the closet where he had put the flask, and threw the door wide. The space was empty. I spun around and met his amused gaze.

"Thought I had better put it away carefully. It is too valuable to leave about."

Our glances crossed like the slide of steel on steel. Then suddenly my own impotence to master the situation arose and overwhelmed me. I did not admit it even to myself, but that moment saw what amounted to my complete surrender.

We entered upon the haphazard existence inevitable with two preoccupied men unused to caring for their own comfort: impossible makeshift meals, got when we were hungry; beds made when we were ready to get into them; with me, hours put into work that had to be torn up and started over the next day; with Barksdale, regular tours of investigation about the island and two thousand words a day, no more, no less, written out in long hand and methodically filed. We naturally saw less and less of each other—a fact which was evidently mutually agreeable.

It was therefore a surprise to me one night in the second week to leap from sleep into a condition of lucid consciousness and find myself staring at Barksdale who had opened the

door between our rooms. There he stood like a bird of ill omen, tall and slightly stooping, with his ridiculous night-shirt and thin slightly bowed shanks.

"I'll leave this open if you don't mind," he said with a new note of apology in his voice. "Haven't been sleeping very well for a week or so, and thought the draft through the house might cool the air."

Immediately I knew that there was something behind the apparently casual action of the man. He was the type who could lie through conviction; adopt some expedient point of view, convince himself that it was the truth, then assert it as a fact; but he was not an instinctive liar, and that new apologetic note gave him away. For a while after he went back to bed, I lay wondering what was behind his request.

Then for the first time I felt it; but hemmed in by the appalling limitations of human speech, how am I to make the experience plain to others!

Once I was standing behind the organ of a great cathedral when a bass chord was pressed upon the keys; suddenly the air about me was all sound and movement. The demonstration that night was like this a little, except that the place of the sound was taken by an almost audible silence, and the vibrations were so violent as to seem almost a friction against the nerve terminals. The wave of movement lasted for several minutes, then it abated slowly. But this was the strange thing about it: the agitation was not dissipated into the air; rather it seemed to settle slowly, heavily, about my body, and to move upon my skin like the multitudinous crawling of invisible and indescribably loathsome vermin.

I got up and struck a light. The familiar disorder of the room sprang into high relief, reassuring me, telling me coolly not to be a fool. I took the lamp into Barksdale's room. There he lay, his eyes wide and fixed, braced in his bed with every muscle tense. He gave me the impression of wrenching himself out of invisible bonds as he turned and sat up on the edge of his bed.

"Just about to get up and work," he said in a voice that he could not manage to make casual. "Been suffering

from insomnia for a week, and it's beginning to get on my nerves."

The strange sensation had passed from my body but the thought of sleep was intolerable. We went to our desks leaving the door ajar, and wrote away the four hours that remained until daylight.

And now a question arises of which due cognizance must be taken even though it may weaken my testimony. Is a man quite sane who has been without sleep for ten days and nights? Is he a competent witness? I do not know. And yet the phenomena that followed my first startled awakening entered into me and became part of my life experience. I live them over shudderingly when my resistance is low and memory has its way with me. I know that they transpired with that instinctive certainty which lies back of human knowledge and is immune from the scepticism of the cynic.

After that first night the house was filled with the vibrations. I closed the door to Barksdale's room, hoping a superstitious hope that I would be immune. After an hour I opened it again, glad for even his companionship. Only while I was wide awake and driving my brain to its capacity did the agitation cease. At the first drowsiness it would commence faintly, then swell up and up, fighting sleep back from the tortured brain, working under leaden eyelids upon the tired eyes.

Ten days and nights of it! Terrible for me: devastating for Barksdale. It wasted him like a jungle fever.

Once when I went near him and his head had dropped forward on his desk in the vain hope of relief, I made a discovery. He was the *centre*. The moment I bent over him my nerve terminals seemed to become living antennæ held out to a force that frayed and wasted them away. In my own room it was better. I went there and sat where I could still see him for what small solace there was in that.

I entreated him to go away, but with his insane obstinacy he would not hear of it. Then I thought of leaving him confessing myself a coward—bolting for it. But again something deeper than logic, some obscure tribal loyalty held me bound. Two members of the same race; and out there the palmetto jungle, the village with its fires bronze

against the midnight trees, the malign, beleaguering presence. No, it could not be done. But I did slip over to the mainland and arrange to send a wire to Spencer telling him to come and get Barksdale, that the man was ill.

During that interminable ten days and nights the fundamental difference between Barksdale and myself became increasingly evident. He would go to great pains to explain the natural causes of our malady.

"Simple enough," he would say, while his bloodshot eyes, fixed on me, shouted the lie to his words. "One of those damn swamp fevers. Livingstone complained of them, you will remember, and so did Stanley. Here in this sub-tropical belt we are evidently subject to the plague. Doubtless there is a serum. I should have inquired before coming down."

To this I said nothing, but I confess now, at risk of being branded a coward, that I had become the victim of a superstitious terror. Frequently when Barksdale was out I searched for the flask without finding the least trace of it. Finally I capitulated utterly and took to carrying a piece of sulphur next to my skin. Nothing availed.

The strange commotion in the atmosphere became more and more persistent. It crowded over from the nights into the days. It came at noon; any time that drowsiness fell upon our exhausted bodies it was there, waging a battle with it behind the closed lids. Only with the muscles tense and the eyes wide could one inhabit a static world. After the first ten days I lost count of time. There was a nightmare quality to its unbreakable continuity.

I remember only the night when I saw *her* in Barksdale's doorway, and I think that it must have been in the third week. There was a full moon, I remember, and there had been unusual excitement in the village. I have always had passion for moonlight and I stood long on the piazza watching the great disc change from its horizon copper to gold, then cool to silver as it swung up into the immeasurable tranquillity of the southern night. At first I thought that the Negroes must be having a dance, for I could hear the syncopation of sticks on a cabin floor, and the palmettos and moss-draped live oaks that grew about the buildings could be seen the full quarter of a mile away, a ruddy bronze against

the sky from a brush fire. But the longer I waited listening the less sure I became about the nature of the celebration. The rhythm became strange, complicated ; and the chanting that rose and fell with the drumming rang with a new, compelling quality, and lacked entirely the abandon of dancers.

Finally I went into my room, stretched myself full dressed on the bed, and almost achieved oblivion. Then suddenly I was up again, my fists clenched, my body taut. The agitation exceeded anything that I had before experienced. Before me, across Barksdale's room, were wide open double doors letting on the piazza. They moulded the moonlight into a square shaft that plunged through the darkness of the room, cold, white, and strangely substantial among the half-obliterated familiar objects. I had the feeling that it could be touched. That hands could be slid along its bright surface. It possessed itself of the place. It was the one reality in a swimming, nebulous cube. Then it commenced to tremble with the vibrations of the apartment.

And now the incredible thing happened. Incredible because belief arises in each of us out of the corroboration of our own life experience ; and I have met no other white man who has beheld Plat-eye. I have no word, no symbol which can awaken recognition. But who has not seen heat shaking upward from hot asphalt, shaking upward until the things beyond it wavered and quaked ? That is the nearest approach in the material world. Only the thing that I witnessed was coloured a cold blue, and it was heavy with the perfume of crushed jasmine flowers.

I stood, muscle locked to muscle by terror.

The centre of the shaft darkened ; the air bore upon me as though some external force exerted a tremendous pressure in an effort to render an abstraction concrete : to mould moving unstable elements into something that could be seen—touched.

Suddenly it was done—accomplished. I looked—I saw *her*.

The shock released me, and I got a flare from several matches struck at once. Yellow light bloomed on familiar objects. I got the fire to a lamp wick, then looked again.

The shaft of moonlight was gone. The open doors showed only a deep blue vacant square. Beyond them something moved. The lamp-light steadied, grew. It warmed

the room like fire. It spread over the furniture, making it real again. It fell across Barksdale's bed, dragging my gaze with it. *The bed was empty.*

I got to the piazza just as he disappeared under a wide-armed live oak. The Spanish moss fell behind him like a curtain. The place was a hundred yards away. When I reached it, all trace of him had vanished.

I went back to the house, built a rousing fire, lit all the lamps, and stretched myself in a deep chair to wait until morning.

Then! an automobile horn on Ediwander Island. Imagine that! I could not place it at first. It crashed through my sleep like the trump of judgment. It called me up from the abysses into which I had fallen. It infuriated me. It reduced me to tears. Finally it tore me from unutterable bliss, and held me blinking in the high noon, with my silly lamps still burning palely about me.

"You're a hell of a fellow," called Spencer. "Think I've got nothing to do but come to this jungle in summer to nurse you and Barksdale?"

He got out of a big muddy machine and strode forward laughing. "Oh, well," he said, "I won't row you. It gave me a chance to try out the new bus. That's why I'm late. Thought I'd motor down. Had a hell of a time getting over the old ferry; but it was worth it to see the niggers when I started up on Ediwander. Some took to trees—one even jumped overboard."

He ended on a hearty burst of laughter. Then he looked at me and broke off short. I remember how his face looked then, close to mine, white and frightened.

"My God, man!" he exclaimed, "what's wrong? You aren't going to die on me, are you?"

"Not to-day," I told him. "We've got to find Barksdale first."

We could not get a Negro to help us. They greeted Spencer, who had always been popular with them, warmly. Then laughed their deep laughter—were just as they had always been with him. Mingo, his old paddler, promised to meet us in half an hour with a gang.

They never showed up; and later, when we started for the village to find them, there was not a human

premises. Only a pack of curs there that followed us as closely as they dared and hung just out of boot reach, snapping at our heels.

We had to go it alone; a stretch of jungle five miles square, a large part of it accessible only with bush hooks and machetes. We dared not take the time to go to the mainland and gather a party of whites. Barskdale had been gone over twelve hours when we started and he would not last long in his emaciated condition.

The chances were desperately against us. Spencer though physically a giant, was soft from office life. I was hanging on to consciousness only by a tremendous and deliberate effort. We took food with us, which we ate on our feet during breathing spells, and we fell in our tracks for rest when we could go no farther.

At night, when we were eating under the high, white moon, he told me more of the man for whom we were searching.

"I ought to have written you more fully at the start. You'd have been sorry for him then, not angry with him. He does not suggest Lothario now, but he was desperately in love once.

"She was the most fantastically imaginative creature, quick as light, and she played in circles around him. He was never dull in those days. Rather handsome, in the lean Gibson manner; but he was always—well—matter of fact. She had all there was of him the first day, and it was hers to do as she pleased with. Then one morning she saw quite plainly that he would bore her. She had to have someone who could *play*. Barksdale could have died for her, but he could not play. Like that," and Spencer gave a snap of his fingers, "she jugged him. It was at a house party. I was there and saw it. She was the sort of surgeon who believes in amputation and she gave it to Barksdale there without an anæsthetic and with the crowd looking on.

"He changed after that. Wouldn't have anything he couldn't feel, see, smell. He had been wounded by something elusive, intangible. He was still scarred; and he hid behind the defences of his five good senses. When I met him five years later he had gone in for facts and glass."

He stopped speaking for a moment. The August dark crowded closer, pressing its low, insistent nocturne against our ears. Then he resumed in a musing voice: "Strange the obsession that an imaginative woman can exercise over an unimaginative man. It is the sort of thing that can follow a chap to the grave. Celia's living in Europe now, married—children—but I believe that if she called him to-day he'd go. She was very beautiful, you know."

"Yes," I replied, "I know. Very tall, blonde, with hair fluffed and shining about her head like a madonna's halo. Odd way of standing, too, with head turned to one side so that she might look at one over her shoulder. Jasmine perfume, heavy, almost druggy."

Spencer was startled: "You've seen her!"

"Yes, here. She came for Barksdale last night. I saw her as plainly as I see you."

"But she's abroad, I tell you."

I turned to Spencer with a sudden resolve: "You've heard the Negroes here talk of Plat-eye?"

He nodded.

"Well, I've got to tell you something whether you believe it or not. Barksdale got in wrong down here. Stole a flask from the graveyard. There's been hell turned loose ever since: fires and singing every night in the village and a lot more. I am sure now what it all means—conspiracy, and Plat-eye, of course, to lead Barksdale away and do him in, at the same time emptying the house so that it could be searched for the flask."

"But Celia; how could they know about her?"

"They didn't. But Barksdale knew. They had only to break him down and let his old obsession call for it. I probably saw her on the reflex from him, but I'll swear she was there."

Spencer was leaning toward me, the moon shining full upon his face. I could see that he believed.

"Thank God you see it," I breathed. "Now you know why we've got to find him soon."

In the hour just before dawn we emerged from the forest at the far side of the island. The moon was low and reached long fingers of pale light through the trees. To the east was a swinging nebula of half light and dark.

of immense blue heron broke suddenly into the air before us, hurling the mist back into our faces from their beating wings. Spencer, who was ahead of me, gave a cry and darted forward, disappearing behind a palmetto thicket. I grasped my machete and followed.

Our quest had ended. Barksdale lay face downward in the marsh with his head toward the east. His hands flung out before him were already awash in the rising tide.

We dragged him to high ground. He was breathing faintly in spasmodic gasps, and his pulse was a tiny thread of movement under our finger tips. Two saplings and our coats gave us a makeshift litter, and three hours of stumbling, agonizing labour brought us with our burden to the forest's edge.

I waited with him there, while Spencer went for his car and some wraps. When he returned his face was a study.

"Had a devil of a time finding blankets," he told me, as we bundled Barksdale up for the race to town. "House looks as though a tornado had passed through it; everything out on the piazza, and in the front yard."

With what strength I had left I turned toward home. Behind me lay the forest, dark even in the summer noon; before me, the farthest hill, the sparse pines, and the tumble of mounds in the graveyard.

I entered the clearing and looked at the mound from which Barksdale had taken the flask. There it was again. While it had been gone the cavity had filled with water; now this had flooded out when the bottle has been replaced and still glistened grey on the sand, black on the pine needles.

I regained the road and headed for the club.

Up from the fields came the hands, dinner bound; fifteen or twenty of them; the women taking the direct sun indifferently upon their bare heads. Bright field hoes gleamed on shoulders. The hot noon stirred to deep laughter, soft Gullah accents:

"Mornin', Boss—howdy, Boss."

They divided and flowed past me, women curtsying, men touching hat brims. On they went; topped the ridge; dropped from view.

Silence, immediate and profound.

The Piece of String 24.

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

It was market-day. From all the countryside around Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming toward the town. The men walked slowly, throwing the whole body forward at every step of their long, crooked legs. They were deformed from pushing the plough for this makes the left shoulder higher, and bends their torsos sideways; from reaping the grain, when they have to spread their legs so as to be steady on their feet. Their starched blue blouses, glossy as though varnished, ornamented at collar and cuffs with some little embroidered design were blown out around their bony bodies. They looked like so many balloons about to rise.

Some of the peasants dragged a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And just behind the animal followed their wives beating it over the back with a leaf-covered branch to hasten the pace, and carrying large baskets out of which protruded heads of chickens or ducks. These women walked more quickly and energetically than the men, with their erect, dried-up figures. Little shawls were pinned over their flat bosoms, and their heads were engulfed in white cloths, enclosing the hair and surmounted by a cap.

Now a cart passed by, jogging along behind a nag and shaking up the two men on the seat, as well as the woman at the bottom of the cart who held fast to its sides to lessen the hard jolting.

In the market-place at Goderville was a great crowd, a multitude of men and beasts. The horns of cattle, the high, long-napped hats of wealthy peasants, the headdresses of the women came to the surface of that sea. And the sharp, shrill, barking voices made a continuous, wild din, while above it occasionally rose a huge burst of laughter from the sturdy lungs of a merry peasant or a prolonged caw tied fast to the wall of a house.

It all smelled of the stable, of milk, of fermentation, giving off that half-human, which is peculiar to country folks.

Maitre Hauchecorne, of Breauté, had just arrived at Goderville and was making his way toward the square when he perceived on the ground a little piece of string. Maitre Hauchecorne, economical as are all true Normans, reflected that everything was worth picking up which could be of any use, and he stooped down, but painfully, because he suffered from rheumatism. He took the bit of thin string from the ground and was carefully preparing to roll it up when he saw Maitre Malandain, the harness maker, on his door-step staring at him. They had once had a quarrel about a halter, and they had borne each other malice ever since. Maitre Hauchecorne was overcome with a sort of shame at being seen by his enemy picking up a bit of string in the road. He quickly hid it beneath his blouse and then slipped it into his breeches pocket, then pretended to be still looking for something on the ground which he did not discover and finally went off toward the market-place, his head bent forward and his body almost doubled in two by rheumatic pains.

He was at once lost in the crowd, which kept moving about slowly and noisily as it chattered and bargained. The peasants examined the cows, went off, came back, always in doubt for fear of being cheated, never quite daring to decide, looking the seller square in the eye in the effort to discover the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, had taken out the poultry, which lay upon the ground their legs tied together, with terrified eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to propositions, maintaining their prices in a decided manner with an impassive face or perhaps deciding to accept the smaller price offered, suddenly calling out to the customer who was starting to go away :

"All right, I'll let you have them, Mait' Anthime."

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the Angelus struck midday those who lived at a distance poured into the inns.

At Jourdain's the great room was filled with eaters just as the vast court was filled with vehicles of every sort—wagons, gigs, chars-a-bancs, tilburies, innumerable vehicles which have no name, yellow with mud, mis-shapen, pieced together, raising their shafts to heaven like two arms, or it

may be with their nose on the ground and their rear in the air.

Just opposite to where the diners were at table the huge fireplace, with its bright flame, gave out a burning heat on the backs of those who sat at the right. Three spits were turning, loaded with chickens, with pigeons and with joints of mutton, and a delectable odour of roast meat and of gravy flowing over crisp brown skin arose from the hearth, kindled merriment, caused mouths to water.

All the aristocracy of the plough were eating there at Mait' Jourdain's, the innkeeper's, a dealer in horses also and a sharp fellow who had made a great deal of money in his day.

The dishes were passed round, were emptied, as were the jugs of yellow cider. Every one told of his affairs, of his purchases and his sales. They exchanged news about the crops. The weather was for greens, but too wet for grain.

Suddenly the drum began to beat in the courtyard before the house. Every one, except some of the most indifferent, was on their feet at once and ran to the door, to the windows, their mouths full and napkins in their hand.

When the public crier had finished his tattoo he called forth in a jerky voice, pausing in the wrong places:

"Be it known to the inhabitants of Goderville and in general to all persons present at the market that there has been lost this morning on the Beuzeville road, between nine and ten o'clock, a black leather pocket-book containing five hundred francs and business papers. You are requested to return it to the mayor's office at once or to Maitre Fournier Houlbreque, of Manneville. There will be twenty francs reward."

Then the man went away. They heard once more at a distance the dull beating of the drum and the faint voice of the crier. Then they all began to talk of this incident, weighing up the chances which Maitre Houlbreque had of finding or of not finding his pocket-book again.

The meal went on. They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared on the threshold.

He asked:

"Is Maitre Hauchecorne, of Breauté, here?"

Maitre Hauchecorne, seated at the other end of the table, answered :

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the corporal.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in an armchair. He was the notary of the place, a tall, grave man of pompous speech.

"Maitre Hauchecorne," said he, "this morning on the Beuzeville road, you were seen to pick up the pocket-book lost by Maitre Houlbrequé, of Manneville."

The countryman looked at the mayor in amazement, frightened already at this suspicion which rested on him, he knew not why.

"I—I picked up that pocket-book?"

"Yes, you."

"I swear I don't even know anything about it."

"You were seen."

"I was seen—I? Who saw me?"

"M. Malandain, the harness-maker."

Then the old man remembered, understood, and, reddening with anger, said :

"Ah! he saw me, did he, the rascal? He saw me picking up this string here, M'sieu le Maire."

And fumbling at the bottom of his pocket, he pulled out of it the little end of string.

But the mayor incredulously shook his head :

"You will not make me believe, Maitre Hauchecorne, that M. Malandain, who is a man whose word can be relied on, has mistaken this string for a pocket-book."

The peasant, furious, raised his hand and spat on the ground beside him as if to attest his good faith, repeating :

"For all that, it is God's truth, M'sieu le Maire. There! On my soul's salvation, I repeat it."

The mayor continued :

"After you picked up the object in question, you even looked about for some time in the mud to see if a piece of money had not dropped out of it."

The good man was choking with indignation and fear.

"How can they tell—how can they tell such lies as that to slander an honest man! How can they?"

His protestations were in vain; he was not believed.

He was confronted with M. Malandain, who repeated and sustained his testimony. They railed at one another for an hour. At his own request Maitre Hauchecorne was searched. Nothing was found on him.

At last the mayor, much perplexed, sent him away, warning him that he would inform the public prosecutor and ask for orders.

The news had spread. When he left the mayor's office the old man was surrounded, interrogated with a curiosity which was serious or mocking, as the case might be, but into which no indignation entered. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He passed on, buttonholed by every one, himself buttonholding his acquaintances, beginning over and over again his tale and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out to prove that he had nothing in them.

They said to him :

" You old rogue ! "

He grew more and more angry, feverish, in despair at not being believed, and kept on telling his story.

The night came. It was time to go home. He left with three of his neighbours, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the string, and all the way he talked of his adventure.

That evening he made the round of the village of Breteuil for the purpose of telling every one. He met only unbelievers.

He brooded over it all night long.

The next day, about one in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, a farmhand of Maitre Breton, the market gardener at Ymauville, returned the pocket-book and its contents to Maitre Houlbrequet, of Manneville.

This man said, indeed, that he had found it on the road, but not knowing how to read, he had carried it home and given it to his master.

The news spread to the environs. Maitre Hauchecorne was informed. He started off at once and began to relate his story with the *dénouement*. He was triumphant.

" What grieved me," said he, " was not the thing itself, do you understand, but it was being accused of lying. Nothing does you so much harm as being in disgrace for lying."

All day he talked of his adventure. He told it on the roads to the people who passed, at the cabaret to the people who drank and next Sunday when they came out of church. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. He was easy now, and yet something worried him without his knowing exactly what it was. People had a joking manner while they listened. They did not seem convinced. He seemed to feel their remarks behind his back.

On Tuesday of the following week he went to market at Goderville, prompted solely by the need of telling his story.

Malandain, standing on his doorstep, began to laugh as he saw him pass. Why?

He accosted a farmer of Criquetot, who did not let him finish, and giving him a punch in the pit of the stomach, cried in his face: "Oh, you great rogue!" Then he turned his heel upon—him.

Maitre Hachecorne remained speechless and grew more and more uneasy. Why had they called him "great rogue"?

When seated at table in Hourdain's tavern he began again to explain the whole affair.

A horse dealer of Montivilliers shouted at him:

"Get out, get out, you old scamp! I know all about your old string."

Hauchecorne stammered:

"But since they found it again, the pocket-book!"

But the other continued:

"Hold your tongue, daddy; there's one who finds it and there's another who returns it. And no one the wiser."

The farmer was speechless. He understood at last. They accused him of having had the pocket-book brought back by an accomplice, by a confederate.

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner, and went away amid a chorus of jeers.

He went home indignant, choking with rage, with confusion, the more cast down since with his Norman craftiness he was, perhaps, capable of having done what they accused him of and even of boasting of it as a good trick. He was dimly conscious that it was impossible to

prove his innocence, his craftiness being so well known. He felt himself struck to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

He began anew to tell his tale, lengthening his recital every day, each day, each day adding new proofs, more energetic declarations and more sacred oaths, which he thought of, which he prepared in his hours of solitude, for his mind was entirely occupied with the story of the string. The more he denied it, the more artful his arguments, the less he was believed.

"Those are liars' proofs," they said behind his back.

He felt this. It preyed upon him and he exhausted himself in useless efforts.

He was visibly wasting away.

Jokers would make him tell the story of "the piece of string" to amuse them, just as you make a soldier who has been on a campaign tell his story of the battle. His mind kept growing weaker and about the end of December he took to his bed.

He passed away early in January, and, in the ravings, of death agony, he protested his innocence, repeating :

"A little bit of string—A little bit of string. See, here it is, M'sieu le Maire."



The Half-Brothers 15.

By MRS. GASKEL

MY mother was twice married. She never spoke of her first husband, and it is only from other people that I have learnt what little I know about him. I believe she was scarcely seventeen when she was married to him : and he was barely one-and-twenty. He rented a small farm up in Cumberland, somewhere towards the sea-coast ; but he was perhaps too young and inexperienced to have the charge of land and cattle ; anyhow, his affairs did not prosper, and he fell into ill health, and died of consumption before they had been three years man and wife, leaving my mother a young widow of twenty, with a little child only just able to walk, and the farm on her hands for four years more by the lease, with half the stock on it dead, or sold off one by one to pay the more pressing debts, and with no money to purchase more, or even to buy the provisions needed for the small consumption of every day. There was another child coming, too ; and sad and sorry, I believe, she was to think of it. A dreary winter she must have had in her lonesome dwelling with never another near it for miles around ; her sister came to bear her company, and they two planned and plotted how to make every penny they could raise go as far as possible. I can't tell you how it happened that my little sister, whom I never saw, came to sicken and die ; but, as if my poor mother's cup was not full enough, only a fortnight before Gregory was born the little girl took ill of scarlet fever, and in a week she lay dead. My mother was, I believe, just stunned with this last blow. My aunt has told me that she did not cry ; Aunt Fanny would have been thankful if she had ; but she sat holding the poor wee lassie's hand, and looking in her pretty, pale, dead face, without so much as shedding a tear. And it was all the same, when they had to take her away to be buried. She just kissed the child, and sat her down in the window-seat to watch the little black train of people (neighbours—my aunt, and one far-off cousin, who were all the friends they could muster) go winding away amongst the snow, which had fallen thinly over the country

the night before. When my aunt came back from the funeral she found my mother in the same place, and as dry-eyed as ever. So she continued until after Gregory was born; and, somehow, his coming seemed to loosen the tears, and she cried day and night, till my aunt and the other watcher looked at each other in dismay, and would fain have stopped her if they had but known how. But she bade them let her alone, and not be over-anxious, for every drop she shed cased her brain, which had been in a terrible state before for want of the power to cry. She seemed after that to think of nothing but her new little baby; she had hardly appeared to remember either her husband or her little daughter that lay dead in Brigham churchyard—at least so Aunt Fanny said; but she was a great talker, and my mother was very silent by nature, and I think aunt may have been mistaken in believing that my mother never thought of her husband and child just because she never spoke about them.

Aunt Fanny was older than my mother, and had a way of treating her like a child; but, for all that, she was a kind, warm-hearted creature, whot hought more of her sister's welfare than she did of her own; and it was on her bit of money that they principally lived, and on what the two could earn by working for the great Glasgow sewing-merchants. But by and by my mother's eyesight began to fail. It was not that she was exactly blind, for she could see well enough to guide herself about the house, and to do a good deal of domestic work; but she could no longer do fine sewing and earn money. It must have been with the heavy crying she had had in her day, for she was but a young creature at this time, and as pretty a young woman, I have heard people say, as any on the countryside. She took it sadly to heart that she could no longer give anything towards the keep of herself and her child. My Aunt Fanny would fain have persuaded her that she had enough to do in managing their cottage and minding Gregory; but my mother knew that they were pinched, and that Aunt Fanny herself had not as much to eat even of the commonest kind of food as she could have done with; and as for Gregory, he was not a strong lad, and needed, not more food—for he always had enough, whoever went short—but better nourishment, and more flesh meat. One day—it was Aunt

Fanny who told me all this about my poor mother, long after her death—as the sisters were sitting together, Aunt Fanny working, and my mother hushing Gregory to sleep, William Preston, who was afterwards my father, came in. He was reckoned an old bachelor; I suppose he was long past forty, and he was one of the wealthiest farmers thereabouts, and had known my grandfather well, and my mother and my aunt in their more prosperous days. He sat down, and began to twirl his hat by way of being agreeable; my aunt Fanny talked, and he listened and looked at my mother. But he said very little, either on that visit, or on many another that he paid before he spoke out what had been the real purpose of his calling so often all along, and from the very first time he came to their house. One Sunday, however, my aunt Fanny stayed away from church, and took care of the child, and my mother went alone. When she came back, she ran straight upstairs, without going into the kitchen to look at Gregory or speak any word to her sister, and Aunt Fanny heard her cry as if her heart was breaking; so she went up and scolded her right well through the bolted door, till at last she got her to open it. And then she threw herself on my aunt's neck, and told her that William Preston had asked her to marry him, and had promised to take good charge of her boy, and to let him want for nothing, neither in the way of keep nor of education, and that she had consented.

Aunt Fanny was a good deal shocked at this; for, as I have said, she had often thought that my mother had forgotten her first husband very quickly, and now here was proof positive of it, if she could so soon think of marrying again. Besides, as Aunt Fanny used to say, she herself would have been a far more suitable match for a man of William Preston's age than Helen, who, though she was a widow, had not seen her four-and-twentieth summer. However, as Aunt Fanny said, they had not asked her advice; and there was much to be said on the other side of the question. Helen's eyesight would never be good for much again, and as William Preston's wife she would never need to do anything, if she chose to sit with her hands before her; and a boy was a great charge to a widowed mother; and now there would be a decent steady man to

look after him. So, by and by, Aunt Fanny seemed to take a brighter view of the marriage than did my mother herself, who hardly ever looked up, and never smiled after the day when she promised William Preston to be his wife. But much as she had loved Gregory before, she seemed to love him more now. She was continually talking to him when they were alone, though he was far too young to understand her moaning words, or give her any comfort, except by his caresses.

At last William Preston and she were wed; and she went to be mistress of a well-stocked house, not above half-an-hour's walk from where Aunt Fanny lived. I believe she did all that she could to please my father; and a more dutiful wife, I have heard him himself say, could never have been. But she did not love him, and he soon found it out. She loved Gregory, and she did not love him. Perhaps, love would have come in time, if he had been patient enough to wait; but it just turned him sour to see how her eye brightened and her colour came at the sight of that little child, while for him who had given her so much she had only gentle words as cold as ice. He got to ~~taunt~~ ^{taunt} her with the difference in her manner, as if that would bring love: and he took a positive dislike to Gregory, (he was so jealous of the ready love that always gushed out like a spring of fresh water when he came near. He wanted her to love him more, and perhaps that was all well and good; but he wanted her to love her child less, and that was an evil wish.) One day, he gave way to his temper, and cursed and swore at Gregory, who had got into some mischief, as children will; my mother made some excuse for him; my father said it was hard enough to have to keep another man's child, without having it perpetually held up in its naughtiness by his wife, who ought to be always in the same mind as he was; and so from little they got to more; and the end of it was, that my mother took to her bed before her time, and I was born that very day. My father was glad, and proud, and sorry, all in a breath; glad and proud that a son was born to him; and sorry for his poor wife's state, and to think how his angry words had brought it on. But he was a man who liked better to be angry than sorry, so he soon found out that it was all Gregory's fault, and owed him an additional

grudge for having hastened my birth. He had another grudge against him before long. My mother began to sink the day after I was born. My father sent to Carlisle for doctors, and would have coined his heart's blood into gold to save her, if that could have been; but it could not. My aunt Fanny used to say sometimes, that she thought that Helen did not wish to live, and so just let herself die away without trying to take hold on life; but when I questioned her, she owned that my mother did all the doctors bade her do, with the same sort of uncomplaining patience with which she had acted through life. One of her last requests was to have Gregory laid in her bed by my side, and then she made him take hold of my little hand. Her husband came in while she was looking at us so, and when he bent tenderly over her to ask her how she felt now, and seemed to gaze on us two little half-brothers, with a grave sort of kindness, she looked up in his face and smiled, almost her first smile at him; and such a sweet smile! as more besides Aunt Fanny have said. In an hour she was dead. Aunt Fanny came to live with us. It was the best thing that could be done. My father would have been glad to return to his old mode of bachelor life, but what could he do with two little children? He needed a woman to take care of him, and who so fitting as his wife's elder sister? So she had the charge of me, from my birth; and for a time I was weakly, as was but natural, and she was always beside me, night and day, watching over me, and my father nearly as anxious as she. For his land had come down from father to son for more than three hundred years, and he would have cared for me merely as his flesh and blood that was to inherit the land after him. But he needed something to love; for all that, to most people he was a stern, hard man, and he took to me as, I fancy, he had taken to no human being before—as he might have taken to my mother, if she had had no former life for him to be jealous of. I loved him back again right heartily. I loved all around me, I believe, for everybody was kind to me. After a time, I overcame my original weakness of constitution, and was just a bonny, strong-looking lad whom every passer-by noticed, when my father took me with him to the nearest town.

At home I was the darling of my aunt, the tenderly-

beloved of my father, the pet and plaything of the old domestics, the "young master" of the farm labourers; before whom I played many a lordly antic, assuming a sort of authority which sat oddly enough, I doubt not, on such a baby as I was.

Gregory was three years older than I. Aunt Fanny was always kind to him in deed and in action, but she did not often think about him, she had fallen so completely into the habit of being engrossed by me, from the fact of my having come into her charge as a delicate baby. My father never got over his grudging dislike to his stepson, who had so innocently wrestled with him for the possession of my mother's heart. I mistrust me, too, that my father always considered him as the cause of my mother's death and my early delicacy; and utterly unreasonable as this may seem, I believe my father rather cherished his feeling of alienation to my brother as a duty, than strove to repress it. Yet not for the world would my father have grudged him anything that money could purchase. That was, as it were, in the bond when he had wedded my mother. Gregory was lumpish and loutish, awkward and ungainly, marring whatever he meddled in, and many a hard word and sharp scolding did he get from the people about the farm, who hardly waited till my father's back was turned before they rated the stepson. I am ashamed—my heart is sore to think how I fell into the fashion of the family, and slighted my poor orphan stepbrother. I don't think I ever scouted him, or was wilfully ill-natured to him; but the habit of being considered in all things, and being treated as something uncommon and superior, made me insolent in my prosperity, and I exacted more than Gregory was always willing to grant, and then, irritated, I sometimes repeated the disparaging words I had heard others use with regard to him, without fully understanding their meaning. Whether he did or not I cannot tell. I am afraid he did. He used to turn silent and quiet—sullen and sulky, my father thought it: stupid, Aunt Fanny used to call it. But every one said he was stupid and dull, and this stupidity and dullness grew upon him. He would sit without speaking a word, sometimes, for hours; then my father would bid him rise and do some piece of work, maybe, about the farm. And he would take three

Sullen = obstinate 869 Sulky = Sullen, morose 327
 " = gloomy 327
 morose 7

THE HALF-BROTHERS

or four tellings before he would go. When we were sent to school, it was all the same. He could never be made to remember his lessons; ^{whipping for punishment.} the schoolmaster grew weary of scolding and flogging, and at last advised my father just to take him away, and set him to some farm work that might not be above his comprehension. I think he was more gloomy and stupid than ever after this, yet he was not a cross lad; he was patient and good-natured, and would try to do a kind turn for anyone, even if they had been scolding or cuffing him not a minute before. But very often his attempts at kindness ended in some mischief to the very people he was trying to serve, owing to his awkward, ungainly ways. I suppose I was a clever lad; at any rate, I always got plenty of praise; and was, as we called it, the cock of the school. The schoolmaster said I could learn anything I chose, but my father, who had no great learning himself, saw little use in much for me, and took me away betimes, and kept me with him about the farm. Gregory was made into a kind of shepherd, receiving his training under old Adam, who was nearly past his work. I think old Adam was almost the first person who had a good opinion of Gregory. He stood to it that my brother had good parts, though he did not rightly know how to bring them out; and for knowing the bearings of the Fells, he said he had never seen a lad like him. My father would try to bring Adam round to speak of Gregory's faults and shortcomings; but, instead of that, he would praise him twice as much, as soon as he found out what was my father's object.

One winter-time, when I was about sixteen, and Gregory nineteen, I was sent by my father on an errand to a place about seven miles distant by the road, but only about four by the Fells. He bade me return by the road whichever way I took in going, for the evenings closed in early, and were often thick and misty; besides which, old Adam, now paralytic and bedridden, foretold a downfall of snow before long. I soon got to my journey's end, and soon had done my business; earlier by an hour, I thought, than my father had expected, so I took the decision of the way by which I would return into my own hands, and set off back again over the Fells, just as the first shades of evening began to fall. It looked dark and gloomy enough;

but everything was so still that I thought I should have plenty of time to get home before the snow came down. Off I set at a pretty quick pace. But night came on quicker. The right path was clear enough in the day-time, although at several points two or three exactly similar diverged from the same place ; but when there was a good light, the traveller was guided by the sight of distant objects—a piece of rock—a fall in the ground—which were quite invisible to me now I plucked up a brave heart, however, and took what seemed to me the right road. It was wrong, nevertheless, and led me whither I knew not, but to some wild boggy moor where the solitude seemed painful, intense, as if never footfall of man had come thither to break the silence. I tried to shout—with the dimmest possible hope of being heard—rather to reassure myself by the sound of my own voice ; but my voice came husky and short, and yet it dismayed me ; it seemed so weird and strange, in that noiseless expanse of black darkness. Suddenly the air was filled thick with dusky flakes, my face and hands were wet with snow. It cut me off from the slightest knowledge of where I was, for I lost every idea of the direction from which I had come, so that I could not even retrace my steps ; it hemmed me in, thicker, thicker, with a darkness that might be felt. The boggy soil on which I stood quaked under me if I remained long in one place, and yet I dared not move far.

(All my youthful hardiness seemed to leave me at once.) I was on the point of crying and only very shame seemed to keep it down. To save myself from shedding tears, I shouted—terrible, wild shouts for bare life they were. I turned sick as I paused to listen ; no answering sound came but the unfeeling echoes. Only the noiseless, pitiless snow kept falling thicker, thicker—faster, faster ! I was growing numb and sleepy. I tried to move about, but I dared not go far, for fear of the precipices which, I knew, abounded in certain places on the Fells. Now and then, I stood still and shouted again ; but my voice was getting choked with tears, as I thought of the desolate helpless death I was to die, and how little they at home, sitting round the warm, red, bright fire, wotted what was become of me,—and how my poor-father would grieve for me—it would surely kill him—it would break his heart, poor old man ! Aunt Fanny too—

was this to be the end of all her cares for me? I began to review my life in a strange kind of vivid dream, in which the various scenes of my few boyish years passed before me like visions. In a pang of agony, caused by such remembrance of my short life, I gathered up my strength and called out once more, a long, despairing, wailing cry, to which I had no hope of obtaining any answer, save from the echoes around, dulled as the sound might be by the thickened air.

To my surprise I heard a cry—almost as long, as wild as mine—so wild, that it seemed unearthly, and I almost thought it must be the voice of some of the mocking spirits of the Fells, about whom I had heard so many tales. My heart suddenly began to beat fast and loud. I could not reply for a minute or two, I nearly fancied I had lost the power of utterance. Just at this moment a dog barked. Was it Lassie's bark—my brother's collie?—an ugly enough brute, with a white, ill-looking face, that my father always kicked whenever he saw it, partly for its own demerits, partly because it belonged to my brother. On such occasions, Gregory would whistle Lassie away, and go off and sit with her in some outhouse. My father had once or twice been ashamed of himself, when the poor collie had yowled out with the suddenness of the pain, and had relieved himself of his self-reproach by blaming my brother, who, he said, had no notion of training a dog, and was enough to ruin any collie in Christendom with his stupid way of allowing them to lie by the kitchen fire. To all of which Gregory would answer nothing, nor even seem to hear, but go on looking absent and moody.

Yes! there again! It was Lassie's bark! Now or never! I lifted up my voice and shouted "Lassie! Lassie! For God's sake, Lassie!" Another moment, and the great white-faced Lassie was curving and gambolling with delight round my feet and legs, looking, however, up in my face with her intelligent, apprehensive eyes, as if fearing lest I might greet her with a blow as I had done oftentimes before. But I cried with gladness, as I stooped down and patted her. My mind was sharing in my body's weakness, and I could not reason, but I knew that help was at hand. A grey figure came more and more distinctly out of the thick, close-pressing darkness. It was Gregory wrapped in

his maud.

"Oh, Gregory!" said I, and I fell upon his neck, unable to speak another word. He never spoke much, and made me no answer for some little time. Then he told me we must move, we must walk for dear life—we must find our road home, if possible, but we must move, or we should be frozen to death.

"Don't you know the way home?" asked I.

"I thought I did when I set out, but I am doubtful now. The snow blinds me, and I am feared that in moving about just now, I have lost the right gait homewards."

He had his shepherd's staff with him, and by dint of plunging it before us at every step we took—clinging close to each other, we went on safely enough, as far as not falling down any of the steep rocks, but it was slow, dreary work. My brother, I saw, was more guided by Lassie and the way she took than anything else, trusting to her instinct. It was too dark to see far before us; but he called her back continually, and noted from what quarter she returned, and shaped our slow steps accordingly. But the tedious motion scarcely kept my very blood from freezing. Every bone, every fibre in my body seemed first to ache, and then to swell, and then to turn numb with the intense cold. My brother bore it better than I, from having been more out upon the hills. He did not speak, except to call Lassie. I strove to be brave, and not complain, but now I felt the deadly fatal sleep stealing over me.

"I can go no farther," I said, in a drowsy tone. I remember I suddenly became dogged and resolved. Sleep I would, were it only for five minutes. If death were to be the consequence, sleep I would. Gregory stood still. I suppose, he recognized the peculiar phase of suffering to which I had been brought by the cold.

"It is of no use," said he, as if to himself. "We are no nearer home than we were when we started, as far as I can tell. Our only chance is in Lassie. Here! roll thee in my maud, lad, and lay thee down on this sheltered side of this bit of rock. Creep close under it, lad, and I'll lie by thee, and strive to keep the warmth in us. Stay! hast gotten aught about thee they'll know at home?"

I felt him unkind thus to keep me from slumber, but on his repeating the question, I pulled out my pocket handkerchief, of some showy pattern, which Aunt Fanny had hemmed for me—Gregory took it, and tied it round Lassie's neck.

"Hie thee, Lassie, hie thee home!" And the white-faced ill-favoured brute was off like a shot in the darkness. Now I might lie down—now I might sleep. In my drowsy stupor, I felt that I was being tenderly covered up by my brother; but what with I neither knew nor cared—I was too dull, too selfish, too numb to think and reason, or I might have known that in that bleak bare place there was naught to wrap me in, save what was taken off another. I was glad enough when he ceased his cares and lay down by me. I took his hand.

"Thou canst not remember, lad, how we lay together thus by our dying mother. She put thy small, wee hand in mine—I reckon she sees us now; and belike we shall soon be with her. Anyhow, God's will be done."

"Dear Gregory," I muttered, and crept nearer to him for warmth. He was talking still, and again about our mother, when I fell asleep. In an instant—or so it seemed—there were many voices about me—many faces hovering round me—the sweet luxury of warmth was stealing into every part of me. I was in my own little bed at home. I am thankful to say, my first word was "Gregory?"

A look passed from one to another—my father's stern old face strove in vain to keep its sternness; his mouth quivered, his eyes filled with unwanted tears.

1 "I would have given him half my land—I would have blessed him as my son—Oh God! I would have knelt at his feet, and asked him to forgive my hardness of heart."

I heard no more. A whirl came through my brain, catching me back to death.

I came slowly to my consciousness, weeks afterwards. My father's hair was white when I recovered, and his hands shook as he looked into my face.

We spoke no more of Gregory. We could not speak of him; but he was strangely in our thoughts. Lassie came and went with never a word of blame; nay, my father would try to stroke her, but she shrank away; and he, as if reproved

by the poor dumb beast, would sigh, and be silent and abstracted for a time.

Aunt Fanny—always a talker—told me all. How, on that fatal night, my father, irritated by my prolonged absence, and probably more anxious than he cared to show, had been fierce and imperious, even beyond his wont, to Gregory; had upbraided him with his father's poverty, his own stupidity which made his services good for nothing—for so, in spite of the old shepherd, my father always chose to consider them. At last, Gregory had risen up, and whistled Lassie out with him—poor Lassie, crouching underneath his chair for fear of a kick or a blow. Some time before, there had been some talk between my father and my aunt respecting my return; and when Aunt Fanny told me all this, she said she fancied that Gregory might have noticed the coming storm, and gone out silently to meet me. Three hours afterwards, when all were running about in wild alarm, not knowing whither to go in search of me—not even missing Gregory, or heeding his absence, poor fellow—poor, poor fellow!—Lassie came home, with my handkerchief tied round her neck. They knew and understood, and the whole strength of the farm was turned out to follow her, with wraps, and blankets, and brandy, and everything that could be thought of. I lay in chilly sleep, but still alive, beneath the rock that Lassie guided them to. I was covered over with my brother's plaid, and his thick shepherd's coat was carefully wrapped round my feet: He was in his shirt-sleeves—his arm thrown over me—a quiet smile (he had hardly ever smiled in life) upon his still, cold face.

My father's last words were, "God forgive me my hardness of heart towards the fatherless child!"

And what marked the depth of his feeling of repentance, perhaps more than all, considering the passionate love he bore my brother, was this; we found a paper of directions after his death, in which he desired that he might lie at the foot of the grave, in which, by his desire, poor Gregory had been laid with OUR MOTHER.

The Two Goats 16.

from "DREAMS OF YOUTH"

NEWS had gone out to the goats in all roundabouts that they were to elect a new old king of the goats had died and now someone to take his place. The election was to be in a great valley where the mountains towered up. Early that morning you could have heard the pattering of feet as the goats came from far and near to take part in the election. Some came alone, some two by two, and some in groups both large and small.

There were many who felt that old Crookedtooth should be made king. Did he not have a commanding presence? Was he not distinguished in his appearance? Should that the election should go to young Scarface. Have the years before him and would he not bring honor to all the goats?

At last when they all were assembled, the old king had been the counsellor of the old king stood upon a rock and, pawing with his foot, called them to order. The voting was over many were surprised, but elected old Smuttyface king. They had felt he would be fair upon all of them. When the election was over, of course, they broke up into smaller groups and began to talk with each other.

Two young goats, Fleetfoot and Sharpeye, were to be busily engaged in conversation. They were talking about Old Baldy, the mountain on which they both lived. Fleetfoot said, "My, but isn't Old Baldy rough and rugged. Sometimes it is hard for me to get around from tuft of grass to tuft of grass."

Sharpeye replied, "Rugged nothing. It is smooth with plenty of open spaces where one may feed under the trees."

They argued and argued about it until the goats at hand could see that they were becoming angry over the matter. Even the excitement over the election of a

king did not stop them. Soon they locked their horns in what promised to be a fight had not Strongheart, a friend of every goat from all around, interfered. He shamed them, and told them how foolish it was to quarrel over matters like that. As they turned their backs upon each other, Fleetfoot said, "Some day I will meet you on the hills, and then we'll see."

Sharpeye replied, "Let that day be to-morrow and we will settle it before sunset."

A number of days later old Smuttyface, the new king, sent Strongheart upon an errand to all the goats on the mountains. "Tell them we must live in peace and friendship," he said. "Let them bring their quarrels to me and I am sure we shall find that all can be settled in fairness for every goat in all the kingdom." So Strongheart went from valley to crag, and visited all of the goats in the far places. Not only were they glad to see him but their hearts warmed as they heard the message from their king.

At last he came to old Baldy and made his way cautiously among the rough places, following the brook that leaped its way down the mountainside. He was musing happily to himself when almost at the top he spied something white just at the foot of a cliff. Upon a nearer approach he discovered Fleetfoot and Sharpeye locked horn in horn, both dead after a long and bitter fight, then Strongheart remembered the argument on the day they elected the king, and his heart was heavy.

Taking a few more leaps he stood on the mountain top. Behind him was the rugged landscape that Fleetfoot had known, with tufts of grass growing here and there at the base of rocks and around the roots of trees. On the other side was the smooth and gentle pasture land sloping away towards the valley. He shook his head sadly as he said, "How foolish these goats have been. Both were right and neither could understand. Aye, they are as foolish almost as men I have known who wrangle about things that do not matter and quarrel when more understanding would show that they *both* were right."

By GRAZIA DELEDDA

(owning up to

ON Holy Wednesday Simon Barca went to confession.
He was desperate, and a desperate man is glad to
remember God, as an ill man the doctor.

So Simon went to the Basilica, a national monument which still lends a richness to the once prosperous countryside, and where at that hour of the morning, only a few monks from the nearby monastery were celebrating Mass, in chapels where the damp had spread a green film over the ancient frescoes. The peasant women, with hoods over their heads and coarse skirts swathed tightly round them and laced up with thin silver chains, were singing the Rosary in their Latin dialect: their voices faded away in the airy depths of the Basilica as amongst the ruins of a temple; through the wide open doors a wild fragrance of spurge and budding alder trees wafted in from the valley. Simon went to confess himself to the 'prior, who filled the little confessional with his huge body, snoring and puffing away in there like a bear in a cage.

"Father, I'm a lost man: I want to kill some fellow Christian, I feel so desperate. I have committed the worst sins. Until a little time ago I was the dutiful son of a family, the only son, Father. At twenty I still slept with my mother; but she was hardly dead when bad companions gathered round me like flies round a raisin seed; and my uncle, priest though he is, turned me out of the house instead of helping me, and now when he sees me he looks the other way. Yes, I have committed the very worst sins: I have gambled, drunk, gone with bad women, consulted witches, blasphemed, wished my neighbour ill, coveted others' belongings, committed . . . forgery . . . yes, Father, . . . I forged a signature, and the bill of exchange falls due in a few days . . . and I shall have to go to prison and I shall be dishonoured. . . . It is all the fault of bad companions, and they have deserted me now: and every door is closed against me . . . there is not one open door, now, for me! But I'm

repentant, Father, and will go to prison and atone, but give me the good Lord's absolution, so that I may fulfil the Easter duties and suffer innocent like Christ our Saviour."

The prior wheezed on and made no answer. Simon, his thin, dark rogue's face in his hands, breathed hard too, and thought:

"Perhaps he's scandalized: perhaps he is pleased to hear that the real cause of my ruin is my uncle Barca the priest. Monks and priests can't bear the sight of each other. Perhaps, to spite my uncle, he'll give me the money to pay the bill."

But the prior snored and said nothing: his warm breath blew on Simon's face. Tired of waiting, the penitent roused himself from his dream of expiation and his malicious thoughts; his big eyes, dark and childish, contracted, and a bitter smile deepened the hollows in his shaven cheeks. The prior was asleep. Ah, even God is deaf to the cries of a despairing sinner.

* * * *

Simon stole away very quietly, his heart sad, his mind a ferment of ugly thoughts. The proceedings of the day were starting round the great altar, and the priest Barca's mobile voice could already be heard chanting with trills and shakes. People were coming and going: now men were arriving too; they were tall, with long square beards as in Moses' time, dressed in leather jackets and short serge trousers, full like skirts. Some seemed like prophets, they were so solemn, calm and unaffected; others were not so solemn, calm and unaffected; others were small, lean as our Simon, hardened by the wind and by evil thoughts.

The women, too, recalled those in the Bible. Simon met one in the court of the Basilica, a tall dry widow, with an olive face and huge greenish eyes, swathed in her almost priestly clothes as in a black sheath, and she only wanted a bunch of ears of corn to be a second mother-in-law of Boaz. Simon shuddered when he saw her; he shuddered with hatred, for the woman was a kind of housekeeper for Barca, and he shuddered at the sudden thought that at that moment there was no one in his uncle's house: and as if night had suddenly fallen, he began to see things and people in a mist, and he stalked along by the walls, stumbling against the

stones which lay about the rough roads. So he found himself before his house, like a surviving bit of a tower, and only then the light seemed to flood back all round him.

He went in, and soon after, at the little window of the first and only storey, his face appeared, pensive as that of a general forming a plan of battle from the height of a fortress. Simon's field of battle was the limited picture spread beneath him: it consisted of the country road crossed by a stream, where rushes and grass grew as in open country; the widow's little house opposite his; the big, dark house of his uncle the priest, and its yard, beside the widow's, shut in by a little chapel with a kitchen garden so overgrown with weeds and shaded by cypress trees that it seemed the corner of a cemetery. Simon thought how he had spent his childhood and his youth jumping the wall between his uncle's yard and the chapel's garden; he wondered if the time had come for repeating the feat, only the other way about, from the church garden into his uncle's yard. No one else was so familiar with the hidden corners, the passages, the twistings and turnings.

He shut his eyes, and saw the jutting-out piece of the ground floor wall where the priest Barca used to put the big key of his room before going out; he opened them again, and, agitated, remembered that vast, rather mysterious room, lighted by a tiny lamp, filled with sacred images and bound books. Here, as a child, he had more than surprised his uncle, in shirt and skull-cap, counting over gold pieces like a wizard, or skilfully piercing his name on bank-notes with a pin. One day, crawling on the floor, crouching down to imitate a wild-boar, Simon had moved one of the floor blocks, and under it had found a box full of money. Now he recalled those times as a prisoner remembers his days of freedom. . . .

For three days he remained almost continually at the window, only leaving it to eat a mouthful of rye bread and some goat's cheese. Yes, while his uncle stored his money under the floor-blocks, he had to live like a poor shepherd; his house was empty, deserted, without furniture (he had sold it), even without doors (sold as well), and the spiders spun their webs over the rough boar's skin trunk in which

repentant, Father, and will go to prison and atone, but give me the good Lord's absolution, so that I may fulfil the Easter duties and suffer innocent like Christ our Saviour."

The prior wheezed on and made no answer. Simon, his thin, dark rogue's face in his hands, breathed hard too, and thought:

"Perhaps he's scandalized: perhaps he is pleased to hear that the real cause of my ruin is my uncle Barca the priest. Monks and priests can't bear the sight of each other. Perhaps, to spite my uncle, he'll give me the money to pay the bill."

But the prior snored and said nothing: his warm breath blew on Simon's face. Tired of waiting, the penitent roused himself from his dream of expiation and his malicious thoughts; his big eyes, dark and childish, contracted, and a bitter smile deepened the hollows in his shaven cheeks. The prior was asleep. Ah, even God is deaf to the cries of a despairing sinner.

* * * *

Simon stole away very quietly, his heart sad, his mind a ferment of ugly thoughts. The proceedings of the day were starting round the great altar, and the priest Barca's mobile voice could already be heard chanting with trills and shakes. People were coming and going: now men were arriving too; they were tall, with long square beards as in Moses' time, dressed in leather jackets and short serge trousers, full like skirts. Some seemed like prophets, they were so solemn, calm and unaffected; others were not so solemn, calm and unaffected; others were small, lean as our Simon, hardened by the wind and by evil thoughts.

The women, too, recalled those in the Bible. Simon met one in the court of the Basilica, a tall dry widow, with an olive face and huge greenish eyes, swathed in her almost priestly clothes as in a black sheath, and she only wanted a bunch of ears of corn to be a second mother-in-law of Boaz. Simon shuddered when he saw her; he shuddered with hatred, for the woman was a kind of housekeeper for Barca, and he shuddered at the sudden thought that at that moment there was no one in his uncle's house: and as if night had suddenly fallen, he began to see things and people in a mist, and he stalked along by the walls, stumbling against the

His voice lost itself inside the already dark house as in a cave. He went in, closed the door, flung himself up the stairs, traversed the narrow passages, found the jutting-out wall, found the key, opened, and was in his uncle's room. He seemed to be in a dream. The window was shut; a light like those round the dead Christ was burning before the picture of the Holy Martyrs. There was a crowd of them, men, women, old people, children, but all looking up with gentle faces, and Simon was not afraid of them. By the greenish glow of the light he bent and began to feel the floor blocks one by one, like a bricklayer with the job of mending the floor; but not one of the bricks moved, and he stood up and passed his hand across his forehead, wet with cold sweat.

The chanting of the procession reached his ears, and he shivered all over. He leant against his uncle's old bed, and the bed moved aside, creaking and shaking as if seized by the robber's own terror and perturbation. Then Simon looked at the block under the foot of the bed, and it seemed to him that it moved: he bent and pulled it up with his nails, and in the space beneath, buried in the dust, he found an iron box with two thousand lire notes in it.

* * * *

On Easter Day Barca the priest discharged the widow Basila, and immediately scandalous tales spread over the whole country. It was common knowledge that Barca had lost many thousand lire, some said two, some three, some twenty; and that Basila had forgotten and left his house door open on Good Friday. The police officer went to the priest's house; but the priest tried to appear unconcerned, clapped his hands and said:

"Trifles! miserable trifles!"

On the Tuesday the widow's little house was searched with care, and she was arrested and set free again the next day. There was no evidence against her; but the inhabitants, or rather the families in the district, split into two parties; the men defended Basila, saying that perhaps she had really forgotten the open door, so making it easy for any thief to go in; the women sneered: "And in a few short minutes the robber made himself at home and helped himself?"

he kept his poor mother's wedding dress and widow's weeds.

To console himself he would drink a small glass of brandy and go back to the window.

From below he smelt the fragrance of the cakes the women were getting ready for Easter, and he saw the smoke rise from wood or tiled roofs. Already a nightingale was singing in the valley, and the fluffy April clouds floated by over the chapel garden, white as bits of girls' clothing blown off some hedge by the wind.

On Holy Thursday the widow left his uncle's house and opened the chapel, usually closed. Helped by the other women of the neighbourhood she pulled down the Christ, laid it on the ground between four lights and four dishes of sprouting corn, and so formed the Sepulchre. But everyone was going to the Basilica, where they were celebrating the Passion, and two real thieves (at least they had once been condemned for theft) were tied to the cross beside Christ. From his window Simon saw his uncle himself, short, fat, prancing, and the tall widow, dry and stiff, walk one after the other towards the Basilica. He went down, but once in the street he leant his shoulder against the wall and stood for a long time motionless and pensive, listening to the far-off chanting of the procession. It was dusk; the new moon was sinking behind the violet tinted hills, in a greenish sky, and the evening star was rising, and seemed as if it would come along the streets of the village like Mary and Christ.

"In a few moments the procession will be here," thought Simon, and moved; but he walked close by the wall; he was afraid of going through the chapel to get into the garden, and of going past the dead Christ stretched on the floor between the lights and the corn shoots.

Suddenly coming to his uncle's door, he shivered. The door was open; someone must be in the house and it was useless to go in. He turned back and once more leant against the wall. But who could be in his uncle's house? The servants, peasants and shepherds only came back on Saturday evening; the priest and the widow were in the procession. He went forward again to the door, knocked, called: "Basila! Basila!"

His voice lost itself inside the already dark house as in a cave. He went in, closed the door, flung himself up the stairs, traversed the narrow passages, found the jutting-out wall, found the key, opened, and was in his uncle's room. He seemed to be in a dream. The window was shut; a light like those round the dead Christ was burning before the picture of the Holy Martyrs. There was a crowd of them, men, women, old people, children, but all looking up with gentle faces, and Simon was not afraid of them. By the greenish glow of the light he bent and began to feel the floor blocks one by one, like a bricklayer with the job of mending the floor; but not one of the bricks moved, and he stood up and passed his hand across his forehead, wet with cold sweat.

The chanting of the procession reached his ears, and he shivered all over. He leant against his uncle's old bed, and the bed moved aside, creaking and shaking as if seized by the robber's own terror and perturbation. Then Simon looked at the block under the foot of the bed, and it seemed to him that it moved: he bent and pulled it up with his nails, and in the space beneath, buried in the dust, he found an iron box with two thousand lire notes in it.

* * * *

On Easter Day Barca the priest discharged the widow Basila, and immediately scandalous tales spread over the whole country. It was common knowledge that Barca had lost many thousand lire, some said two, some three, some twenty; and that Basila had forgotten and left his house door open on Good Friday. The police officer went to the priest's house; but the priest tried to appear unconcerned, clapped his hands and said:

"Trifles! miserable trifles!"

On the Tuesday the widow's little house was searched with care, and she was arrested and set free again the next day. There was no evidence against her; but the inhabitants, or rather the families in the district, split into two parties; the men defended Basila, saying that perhaps she had really forgotten the open door, so making it easy for any thief to go in; the women sneered: "And in a few short minutes the robber made himself at home and helped himself?"

he kept his poor mother's wedding dress and widow's weeds.

To console himself he would drink a small glass of brandy and go back to the window.

From below he smelt the fragrance of the cakes the women were getting ready for Easter, and he saw the smoke rise from wood or tiled roofs. Already a nightingale was singing in the valley, and the fluffy April clouds floated by over the chapel garden, white as bits of girls' clothing blown off some hedge by the wind.

On Holy Thursday the widow left his uncle's house and opened the chapel, usually closed. Helped by the other women of the neighbourhood she pulled down the Christ, laid it on the ground between four lights and four dishes of sprouting corn, and so formed the Sepulchre. But everyone was going to the Basilica, where they were celebrating the Passion, and two real thieves (at least they had once been condemned for theft) were tied to the cross beside Christ. From his window Simon saw his uncle himself, short, fat, prancing, and the tall widow, dry and stiff, walk one after the other towards the Basilica. He went down, but once in the street he leant his shoulder against the wall and stood for a long time motionless and pensive, listening to the far-off chanting of the procession. It was dusk; the new moon was sinking behind the violet tinted hills, in a greenish sky, and the evening star was rising, and seemed as if it would come along the streets of the village like Mary and Christ.

"In a few moments the procession will be here," thought Simon, and moved; but he walked close by the wall; he was afraid of going through the chapel to get into the garden, and of going past the dead Christ stretched on the floor between the lights and the corn shoots.

Suddenly coming to his uncle's door, he shivered. The door was open; someone must be in the house and it was useless to go in. He turned back and once more leant against the wall. But who could be in his uncle's house? The servants, peasants and shepherds only came back on Saturday evening; the priest and the widow were in the procession. He went forward again to the door, knocked, called: "Basila! Basila!"

THE OPEN DOOR

His voice lost itself inside the already dark house as in a cave. He went in, closed the door, flung himself up the stairs, traversed the narrow passages, found the jutting-out wall, found the key, opened, and was in his uncle's room. He seemed to be in a dream. The window was shut; a light like those round the dead Christ was burning before a picture of the Holy Martyrs. There was a crowd of the men, women, old people, children, but all looking up with gentle faces, and Simon was not afraid of them. By a greenish glow of the light he bent and began to feel the floor blocks one by one, like a bricklayer with the joint mending the floor; but not one of the bricks moved, and he stood up and passed his hand across his forehead, wet with cold sweat.

The chanting of the procession reached his ears, and he shivered all over. He leant against his uncle's old bed and the bed moved aside, creaking and shaking as if by the robber's own terror and perturbation. Then he looked at the block under the foot of the bed, and it moved to him that it moved: he bent and pulled it up with his nails, and in the space beneath, buried in the dust, he found an iron box with two thousand lire notes in it.

* * * *

On Easter Day Barca the priest discharged the Basila, and immediately scandalous tales spread through the whole country. It was common knowledge that he had lost many thousand lire, some said two, some three, some twenty; and that Basila had forgotten and left the door open on Good Friday. The police officer visited the priest's house; but the priest tried to appear untroubled and clapped his hands and said:

"Trifles! miserable trifles!"

On the Tuesday the widow's little house was visited with care, and she was arrested and set free again the next day. There was no evidence against her; but the police or rather the families in the district, split into two parties, the men defended Basila, saying that perhaps she had forgotten the open door, so making it easy for the robber to go in; the women sneered: "And in a few days the robber made himself at home and helped

Finally people stopped this talk ; but the widow was looked down on by everyone. She was given no more work ; she stopped going to church and lived in poverty in her wretched house. Simon used to see her, always upright on the threshold, her face pale and sad, but her great greenish eyes turned upwards like those of the Holy Martyrs.

* * * *

Simon paid the false bill of exchange and bought back his doors and his cloak. No one was surprised, for like every gambler, he often had these ups and downs of fortune, and only his creditor knew about the bill. What astonished everyone was to see him suddenly change his way of living. He stopped going with bad women and gave up his disreputable companions, he went to church and nodded to his uncle. But his uncle persisted in turning away when he saw him, and one day when Simon went up to him determined to stop him and kiss his hand, he not only ignored his greeting but literally turned his back on him.

Simon stood petrified. He leant against the wall and remained fixed there, overcome by a terrible thought.

"He knows !"

Then he went to the widow Basila and said to her :

"Do you think you could bake, and wash, and mend my clothes for me ? Fix your own wage."

The widow was standing up before a dead fire combing her hair ; it was thick and very long, of a golden chestnut colour, and made a halo of martyrdom round her olive face ; but when she saw Simon she covered her cheeks and breast with it like a veil, and shook her head in a threatening way, whilst her greenish eyes flashed beneath her knitted eyebrows, thick and black.

"You have someone already to bake and wash for you ! Get out of here !"

He went like a whipped dog and leant against his wall again.

"She knows !"

He spent the days in this way, leaning against the wall, often whetting with a little knife at his walnut stick, or some plug or straw, but more often doing nothing at all.

Never before, even at his worst times, had he lived so aimlessly. He was haunted by the widow's threatening eyes, and felt an almost physical ill when he thought that Basila had fallen into poverty and ill-repute through his fault: some nights he had fearsome dreams; the trunk with his mother's clothes in it seemed a live boar, and fixed staring eyes on the doors bought back with that money.

The summer passed, and in the autumn he moved his seat along the wall, seeking the sun. From the new place he saw the widow Basila more clearly, seated too in the sun spinning or sewing, barefooted, and sad as a slave.

The winter was long and severe. The poor people suffered much from hunger, and Barca and a lady who lived in the neighbourhood sent bread and vegetables to all the needy except the widow. For Christmas a lady with whom Simon had often wandered about, sent him a present of a ram's leg. He already had a little pig and a lamb: and thinking that Basila had nothing but potatoes, sent her the ram's leg, and to his astonishment found that she did not refuse the gift. Then all the rest of the winter, seized by a mania for expiation, he went on sending her gifts, often depriving himself of some real necessity.

Spring came again: once more the women put bowls of corn to sprout in cupboards, to adorn the sepulchres. Holy Friday evening Simon went to the procession and afterwards stood for some time in the usual spot, beside the wall, in the warm, whisper-filled evening. A yellowish glow was coming from the crack of Basila's door, and Simon started with queer eyes at that light which seemed mysterious to him. Suddenly he went and knocked and asked the woman if she would marry him.

* * * *

People talked, then stopped talking. After all, Basila was only ten years older than Simon, and a good housewife: indeed, before long the young man's house was transformed, clean, with the stove always alight and the little yard swarming with fowls. Simon was seen on a horse again, as in the time when his mother was alive; they all said that he had married Basila to spite his uncle.

He was not in love with his wife, but he followed her

Finally people stopped this talk ; but the widow was looked down on by everyone. She was given no more work ; she stopped going to church and lived in poverty in her wretched house. Simon used to see her, always upright on the threshold, her face pale and sad, but her great greenish eyes turned upwards like those of the Holy Martyrs.

* * * *

Simon paid the false bill of exchange and bought back his doors and his cloak. No one was surprised, for like every gambler, he often had these ups and downs of fortune, and only his creditor knew about the bill. What astonished everyone was to see him suddenly change his way of living. He stopped going with bad women and gave up his disreputable companions, he went to church and nodded to his uncle. But his uncle persisted in turning away when he saw him, and one day when Simon went up to him determined to stop him and kiss his hand, he not only ignored his greeting but literally turned his back on him.

Simon stood petrified. He leant against the wall and remained fixed there, overcome by a terrible thought.

"He knows !"

Then he went to the widow Basila and said to her :

"Do you think you could bake, and wash, and mend my clothes for me ? Fix your own wage."

The widow was standing up before a dead fire combing her hair ; it was thick and very long, of a golden chestnut colour, and made a halo of martyrdom round her olive face ; but when she saw Simon she covered her cheeks and breast with it like a veil, and shook her head in a threatening way, whilst her greenish eyes flashed beneath her knitted eyebrows, thick and black.

"You have someone already to bake and wash for you ! Get out of here !"

He went like a whipped dog and leant against his wall again.

"She knows !"

He spent the days in this way, leaning against the wall, often whittling with a little knife at his walnut stick, or some plug or straw, but more often doing nothing at all.

not. Then he remembered that Basila always kept the key with her. He went down to the kitchen, came back with an axe and began to strike at the trunk as if it were really a fierce boar. The lid came open. Simon knelt down and began to search; he found Basila's widow's clothes, and out of her black hood fluttered, silently, two, three, many bank-notes, red, green, yellowish, like withered walnut leaves. Amongst the others was one of a thousand: he took it up, held it against the candlelight and read Barca's name pierced on it with a pin. Then he began to curse and batter his head.

"But why did it happen to me?, why me of all people?" he cried aloud.

Suddenly a sad, sweet song like a murmuring wood floated in from the road. Simon grew quiet and stood listening, his head bent and his eyes wide open, and as the procession approached, he shook and sweated as when he had leant against his uncle's old bed.

advice and was glad at having lifted a weight off his conscience, and married a wise woman. The latter went to church again and talked in a brief manner, and it seemed to Simon that he had gone back to the happy times with his mother when he, still innocent at twenty, went to bed with her and repeated the prayers she suggested to him.

One day, several months after his marriage, the woman who had sent him the ram's leg called him as he was passing by her door, and asked him to lend her a hundred crowns.

He began to laugh: "If I had a hundred crowns I should set out to go round the world."

"I'll pay you the interest, Simon Barca! I can pay; I'll give you twenty per cent. like the others."

"You are going mad, Mallena Porceu!"

"What, mad? Tell me you don't trust me, Simon Barca, but don't insult me. You and your wife have lent money for interest, at twenty per cent., to certain people. Why can't you give me some too? Or is it true what your uncle Barca says? That your wife gives the money without you knowing?"

Simon grew pale, but answered:

"My uncle's in his second childhood, and you're what you are!"

The following days he was seen again leaning against the wall, as in his dark times. He was asking himself ceaselessly: "Why was the door open?" and his brain was toiling, and toiling, digging down deep into a black chasm, seeking the truth as the miner seeks gold in the bowels of the earth.

"She must have taken a good part of the money, and left the door open to make people think some robber had gone in. Oh, the sly old cat! . . ." he thought furiously. But before believing his own idea he wanted to make sure with his eyes themselves.

Again it was Good Friday evening, and Basila had gone to church. Simon waited for that time so as to be free to search the whole house; but hunt as he might, in drawers, in lockers, in the mattresses, he found nothing.

He looked round, tired of searching, and in the half-light the trunk which still contained his mother's clothes seemed again like a live boar. He tried to open it, but could

Zenobia's Infidelity 18.

By HENRY CUYLER BUNNER

Dr. Tibbitt stood on the porch of Mrs. Pennypepper's boarding-house, and looked up and down the deserted Main Street of Sagawaug with a contented smile, the while he buttoned his driving-gloves. The little Doctor had good cause to be content with himself and with everything else—with his growing practice, with his comfortable boarding-house, with his own good looks, with his neat attire, and with the world in general. He could not but be content with Sagawaug, for there never was a prettier country town. The Doctor looked across the street and picked out the very house that he proposed to buy when the one remaining desire of his soul was gratified. It was a house with a hip-roof and with a long garden running down to the river.

There was no one in the house to-day, but there was no one in any of the houses. Not even a pair of round bare arms was visible among the clothes that waved in the August breeze in every back-yard. It was Circus Day in Sagawaug.

The Doctor was climbing into his gig when a yell startled him. A freckled boy with saucer eyes dashed around the corner.

"Doctor!" he gasped, "come quick! The circus got a-fire an' the trick elephant's most roasted!"

"Don't be silly, Johnny," said the Doctor, reprovingly.

"Hope to die—Honest Injun—cross my breast!" said the boy. The Doctor knew the sacredness of this juvenile oath.

"Get in here with me," he said, "and if I find you're trying to be funny, I'll drop you in the river."

As they drove toward the outskirts of the town, Johnny told his tale.

"Now," he began, "the folks was all out of the tent after the show was over, and one of the circus men, he went to the oil-barrel in the green wagon with Dan'l in the Lions' Den onto the outside of it, an' he took in a candle an' left it there, and fust thing the barrel busted, an' he wasn't



ZENOBIA'S INFIDELITY

She lay on her side, chained tightly to the ground, and swaddled in bandages. Her groans had ceased.

"I'll call to-morrow at noon," said the Doctor. "Good gracious, what's that?" Zenobia's mouth was playing around his waistband.

"She wants to shake hands with you," her keeper explained. "She's a lady, she is, and she knows you done her good."

"I'd rather not have anything of the sort," said the Doctor, decisively.

When Dr. Tibbitt called at twelve on the morning, he found Zenobia's tent nearly roped in, an amphitheatre of circus benches constructed around her, and this amphitheatre packed with people.

"Got a quarter apiece from them jays," whispered the showman, "jest to see you dress them wounds." Subsequently the showman relieved his mind to a casual acquaintance of the showman's.

"He's got a heart like a gun-slit, that doctor," he said; "made me turn out every one of them jays and give 'em their money back before he'd lay a hand to Zenobia."

But if the Doctor suppressed the clinic, neither he nor the showman suffered. From dawn till dusk people came from miles around to stare a quarter's worth at the burnt elephant. Once in a while, as rare treat, the keeper lifted a corner of her bandages, and revealed the seared flesh. The show went off in a day or two, leaving Zenobia to recover at leisure; and as it wandered westward, it did an increased business simply because it had a burnt sick elephant. Such, dear friends, is the human mind.

The Doctor fared even better. The fame of his new case spread far and wide. People seemed to think that if he could cure an elephant he could cure anything. He was called into consultation in neighboring towns. Women in robust health imagined ailments, so as to send for him and ask him shuddering questions about "that *wretched* animal." The trustees of the orphan asylum made him such physician in this case the Doctor thought he could trace a connection of ideas, in which children and a circus were naturally associated. And the local newspaper called him a *savior*.

He called every day upon Zenobia, who greeted him with trumpeting of joyful welcome. She also desired to

hurted a bit, but the trick elephant she was burned awful, an' the ring-tailed baboon, he was so scared he had a fit. Say, did you know baboons had fits?"

When they reached the circus grounds, they found a crowd around a small side-show tent. A strong odour of burnt leather confirmed Johnny's story. Dr. Tibbitt pushed his way through the throng, and gazed upon the huge beast, lying on her side on the grass, her broad shoulder charred and quivering. Her bulk expanded and contracted with spasms of agony, and from time to time she uttered a moaning sound. On her head was a structure of red cloth, about the size of a bushel-basket, apparently intended to look like a British soldier's forage-cap. This was secured by a strap that went under her chin—if an elephant has a chin. This scarlet cheese-box every now and then slipped down over her eye, and the faithful animal patiently, in all her anguish, adjusted it with her prehensile trunk.

By her side stood her keeper and the proprietor of the show, a large man with a dyed moustache, a wrinkled face, and hair oiled and frizzed. These two bewailed their loss alternately.

"The boss elephant in the business!" cried the showman. "Barnum never had no trick elephant like Zenobia. And them lynes and Dan'l was painted in new before I took the road this season. Oh, there's been a hoodoo on me since I showed ag'inst the Sunday-school picnic!"

"That there elephant's been like my own child," groaned the keeper, "or my wife, I may say. I've slept alongside of her every night for fourteen damn years."

The Doctor had been carefully examining his patient.

"If there is any analogy—" he began.

"Neurology!" snorted the indignant showman; "'t ain't neurology, you jay pill-box, she's *cooked*!"

"If there is any analogy," repeated Dr. Tibbitt, flushing a little, "between her case and that of a human being, I think I can save your elephant. Get me a barrel of linseed oil, and drive these people away."

The Doctor's orders were obeyed with eager submission. He took off his coat, and went to work. He had never doctored an elephant, and the job interested him. At the end of an hour, Zenobia's sufferings were somewhat alleviated.

She lay on her side, chained tightly to the ground, and swaddled in bandages. Her groans had ceased.

"I'll call to-morrow at noon," said the Doctor. "Good gracious, what's that?" Zenobia's trunk was playing around his waistband.

"She wants to shake hands with you," her keeper explained. "She's a lady, she is, and she knows you done her good."

"I'd rather not have anything of the sort," said the Doctor, decisively.

When Dr. Tibbitt called at twelve on the morrow, he found Zenobia's tent neatly roped in, an amphitheatre of circus benches constructed around her, and this amphitheatre packed with people.

"Got a quarter apiece from them jays," whispered the showman, "jest to see you dress them wounds." Subsequently the showman relieved his mind to a casual acquaintance. "He's got a heart like a gun-flint, that doctor," he said; "made me turn out every one of them jays and give 'em their money back before he'd lay a hand to Zenobia."

But if the Doctor suppressed the clinic, neither he nor the showman suffered. From dawn till dusk people came from miles around to stare a quarter's worth at the burnt elephant. Once in a while, as rare treat, the keeper lifted a corner of her bandages, and revealed the seared flesh. The show went off in a day or two, leaving Zenobia to recover at leisure; and as it wandered westward, it did an increased business simply because it had had a burnt trick elephant. Such, dear friends, is the human mind.

The Doctor fared even better. The fame of his new case spread far and wide. People seemed to think that if he could cure an elephant he could cure anything. He was called into consultation in neighbouring towns. Women in robust health imagined ailments, so as to send for him and ask him shuddering questions about "that *wretched* animal." The trustees of the orphan asylum made him staff physician—in this case the Doctor thought he could trace a connection of ideas, in which children and a circus were naturally associated. And the local newspaper called him a *savant*.

He called every day upon Zenobia, who greeted him with trumpetings of joyful welcome. She also desired to

shake hands with him, and her keeper had to sit on her head and hold her trunk to repress the familiarity. In two weeks she was cured, except for extensive and permanent scars, and she waited only for a favourable opportunity to rejoin the circus.

The Doctor had got his fee in advance.

Upon a sunny afternoon in the last of August, Dr. Tibbitt jogged slowly toward Sagawaug in his neat little gig. He had been to Pelion, the next town, to call upon Miss Minetta Bunker, the young lady whom he desired to install in the house with the garden running down to the river. He had found her starting out for a drive in Tom Matson's dog-cart. Now, the Doctor feared no foe, in medicine or in love; but when a young woman is inscrutable as to the state of her affections, when the richest young man in the country is devoting himself to her, and when the young lady's mother is backing the rich man, a young country doctor may well feel perplexed and anxious over his chance of the prize.

The Doctor was so troubled, indeed, that he paid no heed to a heavy, repeated thud behind him, on the macadamised road. His gentle little mare heard it, though, and began to curvet and prance. The Doctor was pulling her in, and calming her with a "Soo—Soo—down, girl, down!" when he interrupted himself to shout:

"Great Caesar! get off me!"

Something like a yard of rubber hose had come in through the side of the buggy, and was rubbing itself against his face. He looked around, and the cold sweat stood out on him as he saw Zenobia, her chain dragging from her hind-foot, her red cap a-cock on her head, trotting along by the side of his vehicle, snorting with joy, and evidently bent on lavishing her pliant, serpentine, but leathery caresses upon his person.

His fear vanished in a moment. The animal's intentions were certainly pacific, to put it mildly. He reflected that if he could keep his horse ahead of her, he could toll her around the block and back toward her tent. He had hardly guessed as yet the depth of the impression which he had made upon Zenobia's heart, which must have been a large

organ, if the size of her ears was any indication—according to the popular theory.

He was on the very edge of the town, and his road took him by a house where he had a new and highly valued patient, the young wife of old Deacon Burgee. Her malady being of a nature that permitted it, Mrs. Burgee was in the habit of sitting at her window when the Doctor made his rounds, and indicating the satisfactory state of her health by a bow and a smile. On this occasion she fled from the window with a shriek. Her mother, a formidable old lady under a red false front, came to the window, shrieked likewise, and slammed down the sash.

The Doctor tolled his elephant around the block without further misadventure, and they started up the road toward Zenobia's tent, Zenobia caressing her benefactor while shudders of antipathy ran over his frame. In a few minutes the keeper hove in sight. Zenobia saw him first, blew a shrill blast on her trumpet, close to the Doctor's ear, bolted through a snake fence, lumbered across a turnip-field and disappeared in a patch of woods, leaving the Doctor to quiet his excited horse and to face the keeper, who advanced with rage in his eye.

"What do you mean, you cuss," he began, "weaning a man's elephant's affections away from him? You ain't got no more morals than a 'Türk, you ain't. That elephant an' me has been side-partners for fourteen years, an' here you come between us."

"I don't want your confounded elephant," roared the Doctor; "why don't you keep it chained up?"

"She busted her chain to git after you," replied the keeper. "Oh, I seen you two lally-gaggin' all along the road. I knowed you wa'n't no good the first time I set eyes on yer, a-sayin' hoodoo words over the poor dumb beast."

The Doctor resolved to banish "analogy" from his vocabulary.

The next morning, about four o'clock, Dr. Tibbitt awoke with a troubled mind. He had driven home after midnight from a late call, and he had had an uneasy fancy that he saw a great shadowy bulk ambling along in the mist-hid fields by the roadside. He jumped out of bed and

went to the window. Below him, completely covering Mrs. Pennypepper's nasturtium bed, her prehensile trunk ravaging the early chrysanthemums, stood Zenobia, swaying to and fro, the dew glistening on her seamed sides beneath the early morning sunlight. The Doctor hastily dressed himself and slipped downstairs and out, to meet this Frankenstein's-monster of affection.

There was but one thing to do. Zenobia would follow him wherever he went—she rushed madly through Mrs. Pennypepper's roses to greet him—and his only course was to lead her out of the town before people began to get up, and to detain her in some remote meadow until he could get her keeper to come for her and secure her by force or stratagem. He set off by the least frequented streets, and he experienced a pang of horror as he remembered that his way led him past the house of his one professional rival in Sagawaug. Suppose Dr. Pettengill should be coming home or going out as he passed!

He did not meet Dr. Pettengill. He did meet Deacon Burgee, who stared at him with more of rage than of amazement in his wrinkled countenance. The Deacon was carrying a large bundle of embroidered linen and flannel, that must have been tied up in a hurry.

"Good morning Deacon," the Doctor hailed him, with as much ease of manner as he could assume. "How's Mrs. Burgee?"

"She's doin' fust rate, no thanks to no circus doctors!" snorted the Deacon. "An' if you want to know anything further concernin' her health, you ask Dr. Pettengill. He's got more sense than to go trailin' around the streets with a par-boiled elephant behind him, a-frightening women-folks a full month afore the'r time."

"Why, Deacon!" cried the Doctor, "what—what is it?"

"It's a boy," responded the Deacon, sternly; "and it's God's own mercy that't wa'n't born with a trunk and a tail."

The Doctor found a secluded pasture, near the woods that encircled the town, and there he sat him down, in the corner of a snake-fence, to wait until some farmer or market-gardener should pass by, to carry his message to

the keeper. He had another message to send her. He had several cases that must be attended to at once. Unless he could get away from his pachydermatous family, Pettengill must care for his cases that morning. It was hard but what was he to do?

Zenobia stood by his side, dividing her attention between the caresses she bestowed on him and the case she was obliged to take of her red cap, which was very tightly strapped on, and slipped in various directions in every movement of her gigantic head. She was wonderfully happy. From time to time she tramped cheerily, she plucked up tufts of grass, and offered them to the Doctor. He refused them, and she ate them herself. Once he took a daisy from her, absent-mindedly, and she was very much pleased that she smashed his hat in her endeavor to get him. The Doctor was a kind-hearted man. He had no idea that Zenobia meant well. He patted her roughly, and made matters worse. Her elephantine curiosity came near being the death of him.

Still the farmer came not, nor the market-gardener. Dr. Tibbitt began to believe that he had chosen a meadow that was too secluded. At last two boys appeared. After they had stared at him and at Zenobia for half-an-hour, one of them agreed to produce Dr. Pettengill and Zenobia's keeper for fifty cents. Dr. Pettengill was the first to arrive. He refused to come nearer than the furthest limit of the pasture.

"Hello, Doctor," he called out. "hear you've been seeing elephants. Want me to take your cases? Guess I can. Got a half-hour free. Brought some bromide down for you, if you'd like to try it."

To judge from his face, Zenobia was invisible. But his presence alarmed that sensitive animal. She crowded in close to the fence, and every time she flicked her skin to shake off the flies she endangered the equilibrium of the Doctor, who was sitting on the top rail, for dignity's sake. He shouted his directions to his colleague, who shouted back professional criticisms.

"Salicylate of soda for that old woman? What's the matter with salicylate of cinchonidia? Don't want to kill her before you get out of this swamp, do you?"

Dr. Tibbitt was not a profane man ; but at this moment he could not restrain himself.

"*Damn you!*" he said, with such a vigour that the elephant gave a convulsive start. The Doctor felt his seat depart from under him—he was going—going into space for a brief moment, and then he scrambled up out of the soft mud of the cow-wallow back of the fence on which he had been sitting. Zenobia had backed against the fence.

The keeper arrived soon after. He had only reached the meadow when Zenobia lifted her trunk in the air, emitted a mirthful toot, and struck out for the woods with the picturesque and cumbersome gallop of a mastodon pup.

"*Dern you,*" said the keeper to Dr. Tibbitt, who was trying to fasten his collar, which had broken loose in his fall ; "if the boys was here, and I hollered 'Hey, Rube!' there wouldn't be enough left of yer to spread a plaster fer a baby's bile!"

The Doctor made himself look as decent as the situation allowed, and then he marched toward the town with the light of a firm resolve illuminating his face. The literature of his childhood had come to his aid. He remembered the unkind tailor who pricked the elephant's trunk. It seemed to him that the tailor was a rather good fellow.

"If that elephant's disease is gratitude," thought the Doctor, "I'll give her an antidote."

He went to the drug-store, and, as he went, he pulled out a blank pad and wrote down a prescription, from mere force of habit. It read thus :

PESSELS & MORTON,

Druggists,

Commercial Block, Main Street, Sagawaug.

Prescriptions Carefully Compounded.

R_x Calcium sul ʒij
 Calcis chl ʒxvj
 Capsicum pulv ʒi
 M et ft. Bol.
 Sig. Take at once.

Tibbitt.

When the druggist looked at it, he was taken short of breath.

"What's this?" he asked—"a bombshell?"

"Put it up," said the Doctor, "and don't talk so much." He lingered nervously on the druggists' steps looking up and down the street. He had sent a boy to order the stableman to harness his gig. By and by, the druggist put his head out of the door.

"I've got some asafœtida pills," he said, "that are kind o' tired, and half a pound of whale-oil soap, that's highern'n Haman—"

"Put 'em in!" said the Doctor, grimly, as he saw Zenobia coming in sight far down the street.

She came up while the Doctor was waiting for the bolus. Twenty-three boys were watching them, although it was only seven o'clock in the morning.

"Down Zenobia!" said the Doctor, thoughtlessly, as he might have addressed a dog. He was talking with the druggist, and Zenobia was patting his ear with her trunk. Zenobia sank to her knees. The Doctor did not notice her. She folded her trunk about him, lifted him to her back, rose, with a heave and sway, to her feet, and started up the road. The boys cheered. The Doctor got off on the end of an elm branch. His descent was watched from nineteen second-storey windows.

His gig came to meet him at last, and he entered it and drove rapidly out of town, with Zenobia trotting contentedly behind him. As soon as he had passed Deacon Burgee's house, he drew rein, and Zenobia approached, while his perspiring mare stood on her hind-legs.

"Zenobia—pill!" said the Doctor.

As she had often done in her late illness, Zenobia opened her mouth at the word of command, and swallowed the infernal bolus. Then they started up again—the Doctor headed for Zenobia's tent.

But Zenobia's pace was sluggish. She had about the woods for two nights, and she was the Doctor whipped up, she seized the convenient projection, and held it back. buggy and frightened the horse; but

g
n
y
he
ed

Zenobia's end. It was eleven o'clock before Jake Bumgardner's "Half-Way House" loomed up white, afar down the dusty road, and the Doctor knew that his roundabout way had at length brought him near to the field where the circus tent had been pitched.

He drove on with a lighter heart in his bosom. He had not heard Zenobia behind him, for some time. He did not know what had become of her, or what she was doing, but he learned later.

The Doctor had compounded a pill well calculated to upset Zenobia's stomach. That it would likewise give her a consuming thirst he had not considered. But chemistry was doing its duty without regard to him. A thirst like a furnace burned within Zenobia. Capsicum and chloride of lime were doing their work. She gasped and groaned. She searched for water. She filled her trunk at a wayside trough and poured the contents into her mouth. Then she sucked up a puddle or two. Then she came to Bumgardner's, where a dozen kegs of lager beer and a keg of what passed at Bumgardner's for gin stood on the sidewalk. Zenobia's circus experience had taught her what a water-barrel meant. She applied her knowledge. With her forefoot she deftly staved in the head of one keg after another, and with her trunk she drew up the beer and the gin, and delivered them to her stomach. If you think her taste at fault, remember the bolus.

Bumgardner rushed out and assailed her with a bung-starter. She turned upon him and squirted lager beer over him until he was covered with an iridescent lather of foam from head to foot. Then she finished the kegs and went on her way, to overtake the Doctor.

The Doctor was speeding his mare merrily along, grateful for even a momentary relief from Zenobia's attentions when, at one and the same time, he heard a heavy, uncertain thumping on the road behind him, and the quick patter of a trotter's hoofs on the road ahead of him. He glanced behind him first, and saw Zenobia. She swayed from side to side, more than was her wont. Her red cap was far down over her left eye. Her aspect was rakish, and her gait was unsteady. The Doctor did not know it, but Zenobia was drunk.

a look on a wheel

The Cog 19.

By JAMES OPPENHEIM

MOLLY, with her hand on the door knob, turned to the two children in the kitchen.

"Won't you be still, children? Children, won't you?"

Then she softly opened the door and stepped noiselessly into the twilight room. Her husband lay asleep on the bed, stretched flat and fully dressed. She leaned over the breathing, living bulk of man, and brought her tender face close to his hot fevered cheeks and his rough grey hair. In the darkness he seemed so near and so far—so real and so unsubstantial.

* * * *

She felt swiftly over his soft warm cotton shirt for his hand; it was as if she were trying to take hold of him and keep him; and then a tear slid down to her chin and fell and touched the hot, fevered cheek.

The man stirred uncomfortably. "You, Moll?" His voice was thick and husky.

"Richard!" she cried.

She suddenly pushed her arm behind the pillow and drew his head up and kissed him passionately.

"Do you love me?" she whispered.

He did not answer.

"Richard!"

And then he suddenly pushed her off, struggled and sat up.

"Love!" he muttered. "You've let me oversleep." He leaned close, menacingly. "You've let me oversleep."

He gripped her arm hard and looked into her face.

"Damn you—it's time to go to work, ain't it so?"

"Yes, Dick," she murmured, "it's time to go to work. But you're not fit."

He tumbled out of bed, stood up, and then, as he was very sick and felt dizzy, he held on to the bed-post. But he spoke in a blaze of anger:

"And you know we're piling up a tonnage record, and you know the blooming mill depends on me, and you



The steel mill's killing you. It's the twelve-hour day. Twelve hours a day for a whole week—and then twelve hours for seven nights. Seven nights you don't sleep with me. I never see you more than an hour at a time, and then you're dead tired." She raised her voice to a quivering cry: "It'd been better if we'd'a' been found dead in each other's arms the night after we married, when we knew there was a God in this world! Our children were damned, not born!—This isn't a home for our children. It's no home where the man only eats and sleeps, and the woman drudges all day. Don't you understand, Dick? We have no time for any pleasures—and you're too tired to even read any more—and you haven't time to have friends in the house, or call and see people—and you're not any father. And what have the children got? This mill town—soot, smoke, noise, not a patch of green, not a clear sky, not a place to play—and all the ragged children here. Oh, when I think it's our children going to waste like this—and they so full of things that might be turned to good—and something so sweet in them—"

She stopped, staring into the terrible future.

"It's all the twelve-hour day," she muttered. "It makes the men cogs in the mills—no more. That's what you are. You're not a man; you're a cog."

His face struggled violently, he opened and closed his mouth. Then he half closed his eyes and snarled: "Now, you've spoke—and what are we going to do, eh?"

She spoke intensely: "Strike!"

"Strike, eh?" He smote the table with his fist. "Didn't we strike here in Homestead in '92, and wasn't our union busted up good and thorough? And ain't they spies all through the mills, and it's worth a man's job to open his mouth or make a kick? And don't they own us on election day and it's vote with the bosses or quit? Talk's cheap!" he snapped his fingers. "But let me tell you, I hold down a thirty-five-dollar-a-week job, and I couldn't earn half that elsewhere. I'm stuck. They've got me—they've got me for life. We have a few hundred in the bank, eh? But how long would that last? Do you want me to get a job at ten or twelve per, and live like a Hunk? A cog, eh? Well, what should I do?"

know I'll be fired if I don't mark time"—his voice put on a cutting edge—"and you come babying around—do I love you—shucks! Get me my supper and be quick about it."

He added something under his breath as he went reeling into the kitchen. The two children, Nellie and Bob, playing in a corner, stopped when they saw him and slid out the back door into the evening.

"You better get out," he muttered.

Then he sank all in a lump in a kitchen chair and leaned his head on the oilcloth-covered table. His fingers ran through his rough grey hair; and his lean face, with its burning blue eyes and knotty flushed cheeks, and big lips, was half shadowy, half starting out in the gaslight above him. Behind him a shiny black stove was breathing up heat about a sputtering coffee pot and a pan of potatoes.

Molly came in quietly, her face very pale. She poured off a cup of coffee, lightened it with milk, and set it before him. Then she hesitatingly pushed some potato slices on a plate and set aside the coffee. He roughly pushed the plate aside.

"Take it away—fool!"

She made up her mind then to keep him from the mill at any cost. She spoke quietly: "You're sick; you're not going to work to-night."

"Whose going to stop me?"

"I."

She leaned toward him, and lowered her voice. "I've been silent years—now I'm going to speak."

He clenched his fists and loosed his quick temper again. "Shut up! My God, you woman—"

Then she broke in with a sharp cry: "See! See! What an animal you're getting to be!"

He looked at her quickly then, and saw the fire in her clear grey eyes. "Animal?"

"Yes," she whispered tensely, "you're not a man any more. You're not even a decent father any more.—You don't love me any more!"

His mouth opened to speak, but he said nothing. He looked at her with a tragic sullenness, a bitter defiance.

"Richard," she cried again, "your work's come between us. You—a man of thirty-five—your hair's grey!—"

The steel mill's killing you. It's the twelve-hour day. Twelve hours a day for a whole week—and then twelve hours for seven nights. Seven nights you don't sleep with me. I never see you more than an hour at a time, and then you're dead tired." She raised her voice to a quivering cry: "It'd been better if we'd'a' been found dead in each other's arms the night after we married, when we knew there was a God in this world! Our children were damned, not born!—This isn't a home for our children. It's no home where the man only eats and sleeps, and the woman drudges all day. Don't you understand, Dick? We have no time for any pleasures—and you're too tired to even read any more—and you haven't time to have friends in the house, or call and see people—and you're not any father. And what have the children got? This mill town—soot, smoke, noise, not a patch of green, not a clear sky, not a place to play—and all the ragged children here. Oh, when I think it's our children going to waste like this—and they so full of things that might be turned to good—and something so sweet in them—"

She stopped, staring into the terrible future.

"It's all the twelve-hour day," she muttered. "It makes the men cogs in the mills—no more. That's what you are. You're not a man; you're a cog."

His face struggled violently, he opened and closed his mouth. Then he half closed his eyes and snarled: "Now, you've spoke—and what are we going to do, eh?"

She spoke intensely: "Strike!"

"Strike, eh?" He smote the table with his fist. "Didn't we strike here in Homestead in '92, and wasn't our union busted up good and thorough? And ain't they spies all through the mills, and it's worth a man's job to open his mouth or make a kick? And don't they own us on election day and it's vote with the bosses or quit? Talk's cheap!" he snapped his fingers. "But let me tell you, I hold down a thirty-five-dollar-a-week job, and I couldn't earn half that elsewhere. I'm stuck. They've got me—they've got me for life. We have a few hundred in the bank, eh? But how long would that last? Do you want me to get a job at ten or twelve per, and live like a Hunk? A cog, eh? Well, what should I do?"

He staggered across the room, picked up his hat and coat from a wall-hook and put them on. Molly leaped up with a low cry, rushed to the door, and stood with an arm across it. He seized her two arms and pushed her aside. She gave a wild cry that called the children home, as he slammed the door and reeled down the street.

The evening was chilly, making him shiver, and in the smoky air street-lamps burned dimly about him. He turned the corner and walked down the hill. On one side, at the end of the street, stood the black wall of the mill grounds, on the other the smoke-blackened mill houses, each set in a cinderdead soil that never bloomed.

Richard felt sick, utterly sick. He reeled through the smoky air, turned a corner and crossed a bridge into the mill grounds. Many other men were hurrying with him. As they went on, suddenly their grim faces were splashed by far fires and strange lights. They began stepping over intricate tangles of railway tracks in the yards, and all the time their faces shone brighter. Yet not a man of them took any interest, though all about them was one of the sublimest scenes of America.

They did not seem to see the shining tracks, the glistening red and green lanterns, the mills glowing through their windows like buildings eaten with fire, the tongues of flame through the roofs, the vast swirls of blaze and red-shuddering smoke clouds, and the thousand chimney pipes looking through the changing lights. Through all this, among the buildings, over the rails, in the thick roar of machinery, a thunder and thirr and crash of tools, a confusion of yard engines, shrieking up and down with little flat cars, a hurry of lanterns—through it all, the men moved silently, dully, lit on every side, their black greasy overalls glistening as they moved.

Richard entered a large square building where the sloping, many-beamed roof was in huge shadows. Set in the solid masonry of the floor were steel trap doors. A man grasping a lever stood in front of one of these, just as an overhead crane, like a bridge running down the room, came whizzing along. From the crane hung suspended a huge steel hand. It stopped above the man: he at once pulled the lever, and the trap door at his feet opened like a huge

mouth, revealing the "soaking put." This was a well of fire—white-hot—intolerable to the eye. Nor could the flesh come near it. But the huge steel hand never faltered. It reached down into the very hell of fire, and slowly drew out a dazzling, sizzling, white-hot ten-ton ingot of steel. This it bore down the room and shoved on to the steel rollers that ran off into the adjoining room.

Richard entered this next room. At his side the rollers, one next to the other in a long path, were turning, and the ingot slid over them, and made straight for a huge "clothes wringer" that stood in its path. Suddenly it hit this steel-wringer with a loud "splat"—there was a shower of sparks, and it went through with a wild "klong-a-a" like the howl of a hungry lioness. The great wringer pressed the steel out, but no sooner had it emerged on the other side, longer and flatter, than it was shot back, and so, back and forth, until it was thinned into a long, wide ribbon of steel, and was rolled away to the next room to be cooled and sheared.

Labourers hovered about the immense and intricate wringer, and as the blazing ingot passed, their faces and forms came and went sharp and shadowy. Two men stood at opposite sides on a little platform above the "wringer," each with his hand on a lever. One controlled the direction of the rolls, the other the force of the pressure. Richard relieved the man at the pressure-lever, and at once his work began.

It was one of the most terrible nights of his life. He was sick; he could hardly hold his head straight; and yet he had to have a clear eye, a steady, hand and infinite patience. His gaze never left the hurrying ingot, and he had to gauge its thickness and what it would stand. Each time it drew near, it shot over him a consuming heat that burnt and smothered and made the flesh tingle intolerably. Ordinarily he would not have felt this, but to-night he was sick. The glare, too, hurt his eyes, and the steel lever got hot under his gloves.

There was not breathing spell. Ingot followed ingot without pause. He pulled the lever, and then with the wild howl, a shower of sparks, a smell of powder, the ingot was squeezed. The speed was terrific and grew worse, for the

little foreman had given out the impression that his men must pile up a record and beat the output of the other mills. And the responsibility was what made a man old—for if anything went wrong, if an ingot was spoiled or the mill stopped, the money loss to the workers, as well as to the mill, was very large, for the men were paid by the ton.

Hour followed hour, and Richard pressed the lever down or pulled it up, his face twisted with the torture of the toil, every nerve, every muscle strained and alert and in action. His head now and then went dizzy and his face paled. Whenever he winked he saw a red ingot sliding back and forth. And worst of it all, his heart was in wild and new revolt. He heard the cry of his wife—her words kept beating through his brain. Sick and desperate and struggling, he could not shun the truth. He knew that everything she had said was true. Look at this machine—it did all the work—he, the man, merely waited on it, pulling a lever for it. That was his life. He was nothing but a cog. It was this for twelve hours, and then a bite, a sleep, and this again. What was he but an animal? Yes, Molly had told him.

And then, each time an ingot hit the wringer, some phrase went through his head and made him struggle inwardly. Bang—went an ingot!—and Molly was murmuring that he had no soul and did not love her.—Bang!—and she told him how he had stopped his reading—Bang!—And he didn't love Molly; how could he?—Bang!—He was getting to be an animal!

On and on it went, the noise, the glare, the heat, the dizzying sickness. Hour after hour through the terrible night—hour and hour and no end near. His tongue and throat grew parched, and he seemed to be toiling over a sun-stricken desert of measureless, dazzling sand, toiling, lifting, sinking, burning. Now and then a shower of sparks leaped as through his brain; now and then the whole room turned red. Now he seemed to be pushing the lever down over the floating face of Molly, and her fearful cry rang through the mill. Now by a mighty effort he saw clearly again the hovering labourers all sharp and shadowy, the advancing ingot, the gloomy, dark wringer, the menacing heights above him. But Molly kept saying: "Richard, you don't love me any more—you don't love me!"

So he gave the lever a good jam. There was a weird, unusual crash, a splutter, and a dozen men roared together. The rolls stopped, and in the queer silence Richard saw clearly again. He had jammed an ingot and broken a coupling sleeve. A sickening horror went through him. It meant the loss of an hour's time. He had tied up the whole mill. And all the other workers would lose in their wages, too.

All the men of the section came rushing toward him, shouting angrily. And then suddenly the little foreman came dancing up.

The little fellow swung a fist in Richard's face, and shrieked: "Damn you—damn you! Just as we're piling up a tonnage record!—I'll trim you for this—"

Then suddenly fifteen years of silent pressure blew off. Demons raged in Richard's heart; his brain went hot. With his powerful hands he gripped the little foreman by the throat.

"You damned little pusher," he snapped, "go to hell!"

The foreman choked and sputtered as he was released, and the ring of workmen stifled their smiles. Then the foreman backed away, muttering: "I suppose you know what this means?"

"Yes," said Richard, "it means good-night!"

He turned and walked off quietly. He went out into the yards. A brown dawn was searching its way through the swirling smoke, and in the vague light all the confusion and stir of the yards went on. But it never stopped, neither day nor night, through the years. The sick man, hot from the flames, trembled in the chilly air of the morning. His head however, was acutely clear. He saw all about him. It must have been the blood in him, he reasoned. He came of old American stock—men and women who had given up the comfort and ease of home and followed their God to hardship finding a freedom for the soul. He, too, could make the sacrifice. He, too, could go West. The West still craved the freeman. The mighty farmlands needed labour. North-west needed pioneers. There, too, were the little children—the sun and wind and a great soul.

He was astonished to find how clear his mind was. He felt as if he had left himself in the mill.

man. A world slid off his shoulders. He was free, his lips were loosed. In one stroke he had regained his manhood. For years the mills had muzzled him, worked him, sweated him, flung him out for a sleep and a bite, pulled him back into the machinery, taken from him his home, his friends, his books, his church, his leisure, his citizenship, his free speech—and wasted the man that might have been. Now he jerked himself free.

He reached the street. The wind was blowing away, and the skies were clear above him. He looked up. He beheld the fading stars. And suddenly he stood still, and a wave of glory swept over him. Something broke within him—some crust about his heart—and like a revelation he was charged with light. The glad tears came to his eyes. He felt that he was beginning to live. He wanted to open his lips that his open heart might send its flowing words. He heard the singing wind about him, he heard the night-world labouring, the engines puffing, the mills roaring; he saw the lights of the street and human beings beneath them. His heart went out to the great world.

And then, as he went on, with the fresh ties of life pouring through him, his soul went out to his own. He thought of his own children, he thought of his own wife. He marvelled at the strange years he had lived through—he marvelled at the miserable father and husband he had been. The father-passion, long numb, awoke and struck his heart; his man's love for this woman made him yearn with tenderness. And the glory bore him along like a boy in love.

He turned up the dim street,—the house was alight. He stepped around to the rear and pushed open the kitchen door and entered very softly. Molly was building a fire in the stove. She paused with a stick of kindling-wood in her hand, and looked at him.

He spoke in a queer, suppressed voice: "I want to see the children."

He pushed open his bedroom door and passed through to the room beyond. He was gone several minutes. When he came back his lips were twitching, and tears were trickling down his face.

"Molly."

"Yes."

He drew a step nearer. He tried to control himself. He spoke softly. "I've been fired."

She stared at him. "Fired?" she cried.

"Fired! And we're as poor as mice."

She gave a great cry and held out her arms, and drew him close—and closer—passionately hugging him.

And as he felt her arms about him—tight, tight—her lips pressed to his—her living presence closing with his soul—suddenly it was as if there was a rip in his heart: love made him tremble, and he murmured:

"Molly, I love you—I love you!"

And life was sweet again, and they were poor.

Infatuation = to make foolish, to excite
with passion.

Infatuation = foolishness, folly.
Infatuated = foolish, (wanting
Infatuation = causing foolishness.
to fill with foolish love.